KING OF SAMADHI



THRANGU RINPOCHE

COMMENTARIES ON
THE SAMADHI RAJA SUTRA
&
THE SONG OF LODRÖ THAYE

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Foreword by Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche
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Edited by Marcia Binder Schmidt



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THE SUBLIME MAHAYANA SUTRA ENTITLED KING OF SAMADHI THAT FULLY REVEALS THE EQUAL NATURE OF ALL THINGS

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PREFACE

This book contains two commentaries given by His Eminence Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche in January 1993, as part of his yearly Namo Buddha Seminar at his monastery in Boudhanath, Nepal. The first commentary is on the *King of Samadhi Sutra*, a famous sutra spoken by the Buddha. The second is on the *Song of Lodrö Thaye*, written by the great 19th-century master Jamgön Kongtrül the First, also known as Lodrö Thaye.

The *Samadhi Raja Sutra*, often titled *Moon Lamp Sutra*, is widely quoted throughout the massive body of Tibetan spiritual literature. Recently it was brought into the spotlight when His Holiness the 16th Karmapa chose it as the 'background text' for the study of Mahamudra at his seat in Rumtek, Sikkim. Jamgön Kongtrül's song of realization is also an important text. With profound simplicity, it expounds the perspective of Mahamudra as ground, path and fruition.

We feel honored to present this precious combination of Sutra and Tantra teachings by one of the foremost teachers of the Kagyü lineage. With the permission of Thrangu Rinpoche, we have interspersed the chapters with excerpts from the sutra itself.

This publication was facilitated by a generous grant from Patrick Sweeney, inspired by his appreciation for the profundity and timely value of Thrangu Rinpoche's teachings. Patrick would like to dedicate the merit of this offering "to Thrangu Rinpoche's long life and continued Dharma activity." We are indebted to S. Lhamo and Michael Tweed for the time and energy they donated to transcribing and proofreading the manuscript, to Kerry Moran for copyediting, as well as to Gloria Jones for her continued support. May these precious teachings inspire and delight people all over this world.

Marcia and Erik Schmidt
Ka-Nying Shedrup Ling Monastery
Boudhanath, Nepal

FOREWORD

Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche was born with an exceptionally high intelligence as the result of former training. He is a sublime being whose eminent character never departs from loving kindness and compassion. More specifically, he is a great Buddhist teacher possessing the three qualities of learning, pure conduct and noble-mindedness. He is also an expert in exposition, debate and composition. He has ascended within the Karma Kagyü school to the lofty position of a Khenchen, a great pandita whose mastery encompasses both the scriptures and the traditional sciences.

Given in the style of pith instructions, these profound lectures on the key points of the *Samadhi Raja Sutra*, the words of our compassionate Buddha. This is accompanied by an explanation of the lord of the Dharma, Jamgön Lodrö Thaye's song of experience in Mahamudra. It is, therefore, my request that all Dharma practitioners take the meaning of these extremely precious teachings to heart and make it a personal experience through correct practice. Please treasure this Dharma book with great care and appreciation.

Written by Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche at Ka-Nying Shedrup Ling Monastery, Boudhanath, Nepal, on the auspicious 25th day of the third month.

INTRODUCTION

The tradition of Tibetan Buddhism generally places more emphasis upon studying treatises by masters that clarify the Buddha's words than upon studying the Buddha's discourses themselves. This is so even though the sutras, the Buddha's actual spoken words, should be more important. What is the reason for this, since the treatises, called *shastra* in Sanskrit, are subsidiary teachings given to clarify the intent of what the Buddha said?

Among the many sutras, some expound the expedient meaning, while others impart the definitive meaning. These different types, however, are not clearly identified and it is not always obvious to us which is which. On the other hand, the treatises, composed by masters of the past, very clearly define and classify the definitive and expedient meanings. This is why the study of the treatises rather than of the Sutra discourses is stressed.

However, when it comes to applying the teachings to our own personal experience, the Tibetan tradition of Buddhism places more emphasis on the oral instructions – the pithy key advice called *dam-ngag* that we received from our master, and which is often found in the *doha* songs of realization of sublime masters – rather than upon scholarly treatises. In other words, the treatises are used to establish a decisive understanding of the Buddha's teachings by means of the knowledge we acquire through study and reflection. What we put into practice is the pith instructions and oral advice. This is the general state of affairs.

On this particular occasion, I shall attempt to clarify the *King of Samadhi Sutra*, known in Sanskrit as the *Samadhi Raja Sutra.* There are various reasons why I chose this particular sutra. First, it is the basis of the primary approach to training in samadhi used at the major spiritual establishments of the Karma Kagyü lineage. There the main meditation is on the nature of Mahamudra. The pith instructions on Mahamudra are found in the *Tantra of the Bindu of Mahamudra* and numerous other tantras taught by the perfectly and fully enlightened Buddha. However, for

using the sutras as a background, as a support for personal practice, the *King of Samadhi Sutra* requested by the bodhisattva Youthful Moonlight contains the intent of Mahamudra practice. When the great master Gampopa, also known as Dakpo Rinpoche, expounded the Mahamudra system he used just this sutra. We can find clear statements to this effect in his life story, as well as in many of his songs and teachings. Therefore, it is considered extremely important for people who wish to understand and practice Mahamudra to study, reflect upon, and understand the meaning of the *King of Samadhi Sutra*.

The *King of Samadhi Sutra* was given by the Buddha at the request of a bodhisattva named Youthful Moonlight, in Tibetan Dawö Shönnu Gyurpa. This bodhisattva is regarded as one of the incarnations in the line of Gampopa's former lives. Although the Buddha gave the *King of Samadhi Sutra* amidst an immense gathering of shravakas and bodhisattvas, nobility and lay people, the main person who requested the teachings and to whom they were entrusted was Youthful Moonlight.

In the presence of the Buddha, Youthful Moonlight took a vow that, in future times, he would retain and uphold this sutra and propagate its meaning to others, without letting it die out. Accordingly, from the time of Gampopa, who himself used this sutra extensively as a support for the progressive stages of samadhi and for teaching Mahamudra, until today, there has been an unbroken lineage of advice on the method of teaching Mahamudra based on this sutra. For this reason as well, it is very important to study and understand the *King of Samadhi Sutra*.

When the 16th Gyalwang Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpey Dorje, established the Nalanda Institute at Rumtek Monastery, he personally selected the treatises to be included in the standard curriculum for the study of Madhyamaka, Prajnaparamita, Vinaya, and Abhidharma, and arranged for the publication of the necessary books. His Holiness included the *King of Samadhi Sutra* in this curriculum as the supportive scripture for Mahamudra. He published it in a separate edition so that people who wish to train in Mahamudra could study and gain comprehension of its meaning.

According to an Indian commentary on the *King of Samadhi Sutra*, there are 41 chapters. In the 41st chapter, 300 topics are listed; sometimes this list is described as the 42nd chapter. This discourse was given by the Buddha at Vulture Peak Mountain near Rajgir, as were most of the Mahayana sutras.

The Equal Nature of All Things

Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Thus have I once heard: there was a time when the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror (the Buddha) was dwelling on Vulture Peak Mountain at Rajgir together with the great sangha of one hundred thousand monks. He was also accompanied by eight million bodhisattvas who were only obstructed by one rebirth, and who understood clearly by means of their higher perceptions. They had assembled from the world-systems of the ten directions, having fully realized the dharanis and sutras. They enriched all sentient beings with the gift of the Dharma..., being skilled in expounding the wisdom of the great superknowledge. They had reached the other shore of the most sublime of all perfections. Adept in entering all the samadhis and absorptions of bodhisattvas, they were honoring all buddhas through praise and eulogy. They were skilled in magically journeying to all buddhafields, skilled in terrifying all demonic forces, skilled in understanding all things as they are ...

Then Youthful Moonlight rose from his seat, bared his shoulder, knelt on his right knee, joined his palms respectfully towards the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror, and said: "If the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror would grant me the opportunity, I wish to ask a few questions of the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror, the Tathagata Arhat Samyak-sambuddha. ..."

The Transcendent Perfect Conqueror spoke to Youthful Moonlight in these words: "Youthful one, if a bodhisattva mahasattva

possesses one quality, he will acquire all virtues and quickly awaken truly and fully to unexcelled true and complete enlightenment. What is this one quality? Youthful one, it is the bodhisattva mahasattva's impartial attitude towards all beings; it is the altruistic frame of mind, the attitude of nonaggression, the mind that holds no prejudice. ..."

"Youthful one, the bodhisattva mahasattvas who are impartial, altruistic, nonaggressive, and free of prejudice, will attain the samadhi that fully reveals the equal nature of all things."

Chapter 1

The first of these 42 chapters, "The Setting," describes the circumstances in which the teachings were given. The opening line is: "Thus have I once heard." This opening statement is spoken by Ananda, the chief compiler of the Buddha's words. Ananda was instructed by the Buddha to memorize whatever the Buddha said to be able to pass it on and secure it for the future. Since the compiler personally heard what was taught, the sutra begins with "Thus have I once heard."

The sutra continues with a question raised to Buddha Shakyamuni by the bodhisattva Youthful Moonlight: "Please tell me how to cultivate and achieve all the enlightened qualities, how to awaken to complete enlightenment. Please explain how to let the disturbing emotions that exist within our stream of being subside and disappear."

The Buddha replied: "If a bodhisattva possesses one quality, then he or she will give rise to all the enlightened qualities. If he or she possesses one quality, he or she will pacify all disturbing emotions and eliminate all negative tendencies such as pride, envy, desire, anger, and stupidity. What is that one single quality? It is the King of Samadhi which fully reveals the equal nature of all things."

The Sutra style of teachings is extremely extensive, using numerous distinct expressions, all of which are very meaningful. To summarize this sutra, in the first chapter on "The Setting" the Buddha is asked a question on the cultivation of samadhi and his reply is quite concise. This sutra, however, covers 300 distinct topics on the details of samadhi. In the first chapter, the Buddha mentions these topics briefly, but in the last, the 41st chapter, all 300 topics are listed in full. At this point, I do not feel we need to cover all these topics one by one.

Chapter 2

The second chapter in the *King of Samadhi Sutra* is called "The Sovereign King Salu Tree." In this chapter the Buddha tells a story about one of his past lives, when he was a universal monarch with an incredibly long life-span. With great respect, he paid homage to, faithfully attended, devotedly served and received oral instructions from numerous buddhas. In particular he followed a truly and completely awakened one, a buddha named Sovereign King Salu Tree. From this buddha he received extremely extensive teachings on the *King of Samadhi* and practiced them assiduously.

I shall now combine what is taught in the sutras with examples from the Buddha's former lives, for us who are practitioners of Vajrayana Buddhism. What is our main consideration when we begin the training of Vajrayana and, in particular, the practice of Mahamudra? First of all, great emphasis is placed on cultivating respect, devotion and strong trust in our personal master, the root guru, as well as in all the masters of the lineage. Here, in the *King of Samadhi Sutra*, the Buddha describes how he followed and received teachings from innumerable buddhas and bodhisattvas. He especially describes how he had great faith and devotion toward the Buddha Sovereign King Salu Tree, who gave him oral instructions on the state of samadhi. Not content with just having obtained these teachings, the Buddha explains how he made lavish offerings; how he did everything possible to serve, attend, and honor his teacher; how he dedicated the merit of this to the enlightenment of all beings; how he received greatly detailed teachings on the nature of samadhi; and how he applied these instructions personally. This description serves as an example for us embarking on the training in the samadhi of Mahamudra. It is of utmost importance to engender devotion to and faith in our personal master and the lineage masters, serving them in the same way as the Buddha did.

The Buddha explains how he made supplications and offerings with respect and devotion. Likewise, when we undertake the Vajrayana preliminary practices for Mahamudra, the *ngöndro,* we begin the general fourfold common preliminaries – the four mind-changings – and follow them with the inner extraordinary preliminaries – the four times one-hundred thousand practices – of which the last section is *guru yoga*. During the practice of guru yoga, we imagine that the root and lineage masters are all present in the sky before us. In their presence, we gather an immense accumulation of merit by practicing the seven branches of prostrating, making offerings, confessing faults, rejoicing in their qualities, beseeching

them to remain, requesting them to turn the Wheel of the Dharma, and finally dedicating the merit to the enlightenment of all beings.

The Mahamudra system teaches that devotion and trust in our root teacher, combined with our accumulation of merit and purification of obscurations, makes it possible for samadhi, the unique view of Mahamudra, to dawn within our stream of being. Without trust and faith in our root master there is no realization of the samadhi of Mahamudra. This is the special principle of Mahamudra. The same is true in the *King of Samadhi Sutra*. The Buddha explains how, in his former life, he made vast offerings and with great trust and devotion served and supplicated his teacher, the truly and completely awakened buddha Sovereign King of Salu Tree. Through this he was able to understand and experience the exceptional state of samadhi. Without having undertaken these acts of supplication, offering and veneration, he would not have been able to realize the extraordinary state of samadhi. Following in his footsteps, it is important for us to practice the guru yoga section of the special preliminaries.

To quote the supplication to the lineage of the Vajradhara Buddha: "Devotion is the head of meditation, it is taught." As this example points out, with faith and devotion in our stream of being, we can experience the true meditation state, and our meditation experience can progress. On the other hand, without faith and devotion it is impossible to realize the view, the nature of the samadhi of Mahamudra, and it is impossible to experience further progress no matter how vigorously we strive in meditation practice. 'Head' is used as an example because with our heads we can see through our eyes, hear through our ears, eat through our mouth and have conversations. Of course, there are no human beings without a head, but let's just pretend that there is a person without a head. He or she would not be able to see, hear, talk or eat. Just like that example, faith and devotion are essential for samadhi to take birth in our being and for experience to progress. Thus, devotion is like the head. For this reason, trust and devotion are necessary, and to develop these qualities we take support from the guru yoga section among the special preliminaries.

In Lord Buddha's past life as a universal ruler, when he followed the buddha named Sovereign King Salu Tree he was able to make offerings as great as one million mansions. His immense generosity was an expression of his devotion and admiration. Due to this he received oral instructions and without much difficulty was able to realize the King of Samadhi. Applying this to ourselves, it is wonderful if we possess the enormous wealth of a universal monarch who could offer a million palaces. But if we cannot, by using the extraordinary system of Vajrayana with its many methods, we can mentally offer manifold precious things to our root and lineage masters. Through the accumulation of merit created by this act of generosity combined with devotion, our root master is pleased and, being pleased, bestows the special oral instructions upon us. Through practicing the special oral instructions we can receive the blessings to realize the nature of samadhi.

In the *King of Samadhi Sutra*, the Buddha said that, due to his great acts of devotion and generosity in past lives, it was not difficult for him to realize the state of samadhi. If we, as followers of the Buddha, act in the same way, we will not have to face great hardship in order to realize the state of samadhi. Do not think that "Since I am not a wealthy universal ruler I will not be able to make such offerings and gather a vast accumulation of merit. Such a situation will prevent me from creating the right circumstances for realizing the state of samadhi." Instead, understand that we can gather the accumulation of merit by simply imagining Mount Sumeru, the universal mountain, surrounded by the four continents and the eight subcontinents; we then place upon them the incredible wealth of gods and humans and offer it all. By offering all this during the mandala section of the preliminary practices, we are truly able to gather the same amount of merit as a universal monarch.

Mandala offering is undertaken as a method for gathering a vast accumulation of merit, and is considered extremely important for training in the samadhi of Mahamudra. The Buddha illustrates its importance here in this chapter recounting his former life as a universal monarch who made immense offerings.

CHAPTER 3

We now come to the third chapter, "Describing the Qualities of the Buddhas," which proclaims the virtues of samadhi. As the Buddha has stated, we need to cultivate faith and devotion in our root and lineage teachers to be able to receive the instructions on samadhi. We should then apply these instructions in our own practical experience. These instructions on the state of samadhi are extremely precious and important. By training in the state of samadhi, we attain the ultimate fruition and not just temporary benefits. Having attained the ultimate fruition, we give rise to all the immense enlightened qualities of the body, speech and mind of the awakened ones. The immense qualities of the enlightened body include the 32 major and 80 minor marks of excellence. The immense qualities of the enlightened speech include the 60 aspects of purity, which

are called the melodious voice of Brahma. The immense qualities of enlightened mind include the fourfold fearlessness, the ten powers, the 18 unshared qualities of a buddha, the wisdom of knowing the nature as it is, and the wisdom of seeing all that exists. All these perfect qualities are achieved simply through training in this kind of samadhi.

Additionally, when practicing according to our tradition, it is extremely important to have complete trust and special confidence in the teachings themselves. This is illustrated in Milarepa's life story. One day near the end of his life, Milarepa's close students gathered around him. Rechungpa, one of his chief disciples, said, "When we hear about the great hardships you endured in order to receive teachings, to practice and realize them, and the incredibly high level of realization and special qualities you manifested after having attained the fruition of practice, it is clear to us that you must be an incarnation of some extremely special bodhisattva or buddha. It's obvious that you cannot be an ordinary human being. Please clearly tell us, your disciples, which buddha or bodhisattva you are an incarnation of so that our faith and devotion will increase even more."

Milarepa replied, "That you see me as an incarnation of a bodhisattva or as a buddha in person is, from one standpoint, quite good. It shows that you have pure perception, devotion and faith in me, and that you appreciate the qualities of a master. But, on the other hand, maybe this is actually bad. To possess this kind of appreciation is perhaps even a wrong view. This means you believe that enlightenment was not reached due to the power and blessings of the extraordinary teachings and the practice of realizing them, but because I was already enlightened long ago, being an emanation of a former buddha or bodhisattva. This is a completely misguided attitude. It means the teachings have no power and that practicing them has no effect. That is a wrong view."

"I am definitely not an incarnation of a buddha or bodhisattva. I am an ordinary person. Among ordinary people, I am one of the lowest. When I was young, I learned black magic and used it against others. By bringing down hailstorms, destroying my enemies and so forth I accumulated immense negative karma and obscurations. I was a great sinner, and yet due to some remarkable fortune I was able to meet a truly qualified master. I was able to receive the authentic teachings and apply them very earnestly through the extraordinary means of practice. Through that practice, and the power and strength of the Dharma, my negative karma, obscurations and disturbing emotions were totally purified. It is because of this purification that I was able to reach the state of complete enlightenment, the unified state of a vajra-holder, within a single lifetime, without having to hope

for some fruition in a later rebirth. It is truly and solely due to the power of the oral instructions of Mahamudra and their practice, not because of my being an emanation of a buddha or a bodhisattva."

It is not necessary to go through innumerable lifetimes to attain the state of enlightenment. Through the profound samadhi, recognized by means of the teachings we can now receive, it is possible within a single body and lifetime to attain the unified state of a vajra-holder: in other words, complete enlightenment itself.

The *King of Samadhi Sutra* is a teaching that forms the background for Mahamudra practice. If we only examine the superficial meaning it does not seem to be about Mahamudra at all. In a tremendously detailed way, it describes the Buddha's actions in his former lives and it extols the qualities of enlightenment and the virtues of practicing the general state of samadhi. We will not find the word 'Mahamudra' anywhere. Nowhere does it say we should make mandala offerings or engage in guru yoga. We might conclude that this text is not really about Mahamudra because even the teachings on shamatha and vipashyana are not as clearly defined here as they are in other Mahamudra texts. Yet, apart from this, if we examine the depth of its meaning, we will find that the sutra clearly emphasizes devotion to the buddhas or to the teacher who gives the teachings, as well as trust in the teachings themselves; and the importance of gathering an immense amount of merit. Therefore, we can easily apply the real intention of the sutra to our practice of, for example, cultivating devotion through guru yoga. From this standpoint, it is more beneficial to explain the actual intent of the sutra rather than just to interpret its literal meaning.

Some people have told me that, after studying the words of the Buddha and spending many years practicing them, they had the feeling that what the Buddha taught was completely different from what we practice within Vajrayana Buddhism. Truthfully, at first glance it looks that way. What goes on inside a Vajrayana Buddhist temple and the what the Buddha taught do not seem to be related. In the sutras, there is no mention of playing trumpets, putting tormas on the shrine, and so on. There seems to be a big contradiction here. But when we penetrate the meaning of what is explained in the sutras and the meaning of what takes place in a Vajrayana temple, we will find no conflict whatsoever. Moreover, it may seem to us at first glance that the style of teachings explained in the sutras and the style of Mahamudra practice are entirely different and perhaps in conflict, but this is not the case either. If we explore the meaning, no conflict exists at all. We can discover from personal application of the teach-

ings that what the sutra expounds in great detail is exactly the same as what is concisely shown in the oral instructions of our lineage.

Today's teachings covered the first three chapters of the *King of Samadhi Sutra*. If you have any questions, some doubts or uncertainty I shall try to clear them up to the best of my ability.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

STUDENT: I have heard some Vajrayana practitioners say it is not particularly important to study the sutras and that they are inferior and unimportant. Can you comment on this, Rinpoche?

RINPOCHE: It is true that we could say that Vajrayana is superior in profundity and special qualities compared with the Sutra system. On the other hand, it is extremely important to study the Sutra system. From the great monastic colleges of the Geluk tradition, Sera, Ganden and Drepung, in Central Tibet across the country to the monastic college of Shri Singha at Dzogchen Monastery in East Tibet, the main topics of study were not necessarily Vajrayana. On the contrary, Sutra teachings were the primary part of the curriculum. They did not focus their studies so much on the four sections of tantra, but rather on the Prajnaparamita, Vinaya, Abhidharma and so forth. There was a reason for this. When studying these teachings, every detail is explained in a very reasonable and logical manner – the purpose, the principle, the definition, and the logic. In Vajrayana teachings, the explanations focus on how to carry out a practice, but do not necessarily include detailed reasons why. Nevertheless, if we already have outstanding trust and confidence, can we attain accomplishment through practicing the Vajrayana teachings without detailed studies? Certainly we can! If, on the other hand, we are the skeptical type, or if we feel doubt and need to have clarification, the Vajrayana teachings in themselves do not give much support for removing doubt and gaining a clear sense of certainty. To find such justification we must return to the Sutra teachings, where the perfect Buddha explains exactly how all things are empty, how to realize that all things are empty, how to gather the accumulations of merit, why certain states of mind accumulate merit and so forth. Treatises by the learned masters as well clearly establish the reasons for practice. In this sense, to study and reflect upon the Sutra system, including the words of the Buddha and their treatises, is extremely important when you need to gain unshakable certainty and conviction. That is why people following Tibetan Buddhism study these scriptures.

STUDENT: Where did Gampopa get this text from? Is there a Sanskrit original? How did lineage of the *Samadhi Raja Sutra* pass on to Gampopa?

RINPOCHE: As you know, Lord Gampopa has two lineages. It is said that he unified two streams of transmission: the Kagyü Mahamudra transmission, and the Kadampa lineage of the Sutra teachings that originated from Lord Atisha. The lineage of the Mahamudra teachings came from Tilopa, Naropa, Marpa, and then Milarepa, from whom Gampopa received it. He most probably received the *King of Samadhi Sutra* from the lineage that came through Atisha.

When Marpa was in India, he received a prediction from Naropa, who said, "Like lion cubs, your disciples' disciples will be even more eminent than their teachers." From an intellectual point of view, there is no real reason to make this statement, because if disciples follow the same teachings as their master, they will develop exactly the same qualities as their master. Why? Because the teachings are the same. Their disciples' disciples will, again, give rise to the same qualities as their own teachers. Why? Because it is, again, the same teaching. On the other hand, that "their disciples' disciples will be even more eminent than their teachers," means that when Gampopa unified the two streams of transmission – the one of Mahamudra and the other the Sutra system of the Kadampa lineage – from the perspective of completeness, having more aspects of teachings available, it could be said that the teachings then became more profound. This does not mean that the view of Mahamudra suddenly became more profound – it is not like that at all. But because Gampopa had unified two streams of transmission, it could be said that the teachings, at that point, became more profound. This is what Naropa meant, that Marpa's 'grand-disciple,' Gampopa, would be more eminent than Marpa's own disciple.

That is one point about Gampopa's lineage of transmission. Another is that through his eminent clairvoyant knowledge, Gampopa was able to recall his former incarnation as Youthful Moonlight, he who received this teaching directly from the Buddha. He mentions this in one of his songs of realization, saying, "When I was Youthful Moonlight, the Buddha bestowed upon me the *King of Samadhi Sutra*." In that sense, he possessed a direct lineage to the teaching through the recollection of his former life.

STUDENT: Did Dakpo Rinpoche (Gampopa) then write this sutra?

RINPOCHE: No, this sutra is a translation from Sanskrit into Tibetan. It was not written by Gampopa.

STUDENT: What does it mean to accumulate merit which then allows one to enter into samadhi, or to be able to progress in the Dharma. I would like to gain some better understanding of what the word 'merit' means.

RINPOCHE: It is certainly true that by simply receiving teachings and putting effort into the training, the state of samadhi will take birth in our being. But, on the other hand, we sometimes encounter many hindrances, many obstacles, and we find ourselves in truly unconducive surroundings: it may seem difficult to receive guidance and to understand the teachings, or something may go wrong so that, for one reason or another, we cannot practice. Why is this? It is simply due to a lack of merit. You could say that conducive circumstances are not present. Why not? Because conducive circumstances, which are a product of our merit, do not occur without merit. Therefore, it is said that the accumulation of merit shows itself as both a virtuous mental pattern, a habitual tendency toward virtue, as well as an environment in which it is easy to meet a qualified master and receive the precious instructions. Having met such a master, it is due to our merit that we trust him and have confidence in the teachings, so that no great obstacles arise when receiving guidance. Similarly, when trying to practice meditation, no great obstacles will arise because we have an accumulation of past merit. Without this past merit, it is very difficult to end up in a situation where teachings are available, to meet a teacher and to receive advice – especially teachings on samadhi. Even if we do so, it is difficult to trust the master. Even if we trust him, it is difficult to trust that the teachings will be effective. Even when we try to practice, many obstacles can arise. This is all cleared away by gathering the accumulation of merit. From that standpoint, we can understand that the accumulation of merit is extremely important in order to receive teachings on samadhi and put them into practice.

We can see this in the life stories of Marpa and Milarepa. Many people met Marpa when he was alive, but not everyone had the feeling that he possessed the pith instructions through which one could attain complete enlightenment in that very lifetime. To perceive this and connect with such a master required a tremendous amount of merit. Some people met him and thought, "There's an old man who has been to India many times." And that was how they saw him. They did not feel any devotion, they did not ask for teachings and, therefore, they did not practice and attain enlightenment like Milarepa did. Milarepa had immense merit and was ready to perceive Marpa's true qualities: he saw him as a great treasury of instructions and so tried to receive and assimilate Marpa's teachings. That is why Milarepa was able to attain complete enlightenment in one lifetime, unlike other contemporaries of Marpa.

Let's conclude with dedicating the merit and making aspirations.

DEFINITE REALIZATION

Then Youthful Moonlight rose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, knelt on his right knee, joined his palms respectfully towards the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror, and said: "If the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror would grant me the opportunity, I wish to ask a few questions of Transcendent Perfect Conqueror, the Tathagata Arhat Samyak-sambuddha."

The Transcendent Perfect Conqueror replied to Youthful Moonlight: "Youthful one, the tathagata always gives you opportunity. Ask whatever you wish."

When the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror had provided the opportunity by speaking those words, Youthful Moonlight asked the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror: "Transcendent Perfect Conqueror, to which quality does the word 'samadhi' pertain?"

The Transcendent Perfect Conqueror replied to Youthful Moonlight in the following words: "Youthful one, the word 'samadhi' means this: it is the definite realization of mind; it is the insight that mind is nonarising, neither continuous nor discontinuous; it is shedding the load; it is the wisdom of the tathagatas, the eminence of the buddhas. It hollows out desire, pacifies anger, and dispels stupidity."

I'd like to reiterate the teachings found in the first three chapters of the *King of Samadhi Sutra*: The first topic was the 'setting,' the circumstance for the teaching, for the discourse to take place, while the other two topics involved extolling the qualities of enlightenment and the Enlightened Ones. Indirectly, I also taught the meaning of guru yoga with regards to

learning how to develop devotion and faith in the root and lineage masters. We train in this within the special preliminary practices.

The second chapter describes how the Buddha, in a former life, followed a previous Buddha by the name Sovereign King Salu Tree and received instructions on the state of samadhi, while the third chapter describes how the Buddha fully awakened to the qualities of enlightenment by means of training in that state of samadhi. In this way, it becomes clear that samadhi is an extremely important, profound and precious state of mind.

CHAPTER 4

We have reached the fourth chapter, called the "Chapter on Samadhi," in which the actual identity of samadhi itself is described.

Youthful Moonlight, who is the main recipient of this teaching, again asks the Buddha, "What does samadhi really mean?" In response, the Buddha clearly defines 'samadhi,' as the path to be pursued through meditation training, as well as the ultimate state of fruition.

Among all the Buddha's teachings, there are sutras that are intended for the practitioners of the lesser vehicles, sutras that describe the main principle of the Mind Only School, and sutras that primarily teach the Great Middle Way. What is the main principle, the chief meaning taught in all these sutras? The primary topic is how to gain certainty about emptiness, the nature of things. Since we are followers of the Tibetan system of Vajrayana and practitioners of the extraordinary state of samadhi in connection with the pith instructions of Mahamudra, how should we relate to the teaching which is described in this particular sutra? The Buddha defines samadhi as the definite realization of mind.

Within the snowy ranges of Tibet, the Vajrayana teachings flourished. Vajrayana practice is a training in seeing the real condition of things. How is this taught, how is it trained in? It is achieved by instruction and training in Mahamudra and Dzogchen. A great variety of oral instructions have been given on these topics. In spite of the immense variety of teachings, the heart of this approach, whether Mahamudra or Dzogchen, is 'mind teachings,' in Tibetan known as *semtri*, which point out the nature of mind.

The pointing-out instruction is unlike the general Sutra system, where deduction is taken as the path. These Sutra teachings use intellectual reasoning to arrive at certainty about what is true. The pointing-out instruction introduces the nature of mind, the nature of things in actuality, in

our direct perception. Corresponding to that, we find here the phrase *sem ngepar tokpa*, 'to definitively realize the mind.' Please understand that what is being described here in this sutra, as well as in Mahamudra and Dzogchen, is the definitive realization of the state of the mind.

According to the general system of teachings, we can describe what is called 'mind' or 'cognition' as having six aspects that are usually referred to as the 'six consciousnesses.' In another context, they are called the 'eight consciousnesses.' These six or eight aspects of cognition are defined by the different functions activated when attention is directed outwardly. But during the individual practice of samadhi, we direct our attention inwardly, toward the identity of mind itself. We can discover that this identity is by nature nonexistent. This natural nonexistence of some 'thing' called mind means that we closely examine inside and outside of our body, as well as into the empty sky, asking ourselves, "What is this 'mind;' what is this 'consciousness?' Where is it? Does it exist here or there? What kind of form or color does it have? Can it be defined as a concrete thing?" By examining in this way we reach the understanding that mind cannot be found to have any entity with a perceivable shape or form.

In the general system of teachings, mind is described as possessing substantial existence in the sense of being conscious, cognizant and awake. Yet, when we search our own experience for this conscious entity, we fail to find anything definable. We then ask, "When it doesn't have a shape or form, is there still something called mind?" For such a 'mind' to truly exist, it should be possible to establish its existence as a concrete entity. But we find that we cannot establish the concrete existence of any such thing whatsoever. This is because the identity of mind is by nature emptiness. This is why the perfectly awakened Buddha taught that all phenomena are emptiness.

Frequently people believe that emptiness is something profound and far, far away, something incomprehensible and completely beyond our grasp. But actually it is not that difficult to understand. The very moment of looking into your own mind, the perceiver, and asking, "What is the mind?," you fail to find it. The reason is that its nature is emptiness. Therefore, the Buddha said that samadhi is the definite realization of mind.

So, the mind is emptiness. Here in this sutra are expressions that describe the real condition, the fact of mind being naturally empty of any identity. The Buddha explains that mind is nonarising, neither continuous nor discontinuous. This insight causes us to shed the burden of sam-

saric existence. These lines point to the truth that the essence of mind is emptiness.

Emptiness is clearly demonstrated and experienced when we look into the true condition of our own minds and see how it really is. By failing to find anything we can identify as mind, not only do we personally fail to find our mind, other people also cannot find it. This is what the third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje, meant when he said, "You cannot say that mind exists because even the Buddha doesn't see it." Not only are we unable to find it, even the Buddha could not find a concrete thing called 'mind.' The phrases 'nonarising' and 'discontinuous' are used to show what the nature of experience really is. Here the word 'discontinuous' means that there is no 'thing' that connects past, present and future.

The next question that arises is, "Is the mind totally nonexistent like physical space, a vacant nothing whatsoever?" No, it is not like that either. While being empty of identity, without any concrete existence whatsoever, at the same time, the mind possesses the quality of cognizance often called luminous wisdom. This luminous wisdom means that there is a capacity to perceive and understand whatever takes place. The nature of mind is not merely an empty, oblivious, void state.

Simultaneous with being empty, the nature of mind has the quality of wisdom, of original wakefulness. The Buddha expounded this main principle in what, among the Three Turnings of the Wheel of Dharma, is called the Third Turning. This was also taught in the *Uttara Tantra,* one of the five treatises of Maitreya. Within these teachings, the real condition of our empty nature is called buddha nature, *sugata-garbha.*

This buddha nature is generally defined as the potential for our future awakening to true and complete enlightenment. It is the basis for the twofold wisdom to dawn from within: the wisdom that knows that nature as it is, and the wisdom that sees all that exists. Buddha nature is present within the mind-stream of all sentient beings. In the *King of Samadhi Sutra,* this wisdom-nature of mind is called the 'original wakefulness of the tathagata' and is said to be 'endowed with the supreme aspect of all enlightened qualities.'

This means that in the state of an ordinary person who has not realized the nature of mind exactly as it is, the original wakefulness of the tathagata is nevertheless still present, and endowed with the supreme aspect of all enlightened qualities. This quality is what the sutras define as buddha nature, and what Maitreya mentions in his teaching entitled the *Uttara Tantra*: "Just as it was before, so it will be later. It is the unchanging, innate nature of dharmata."

Even if we are ordinary sentient beings, our nature of mind still possesses the potential for complete enlightenment. After one has fully awakened to true and complete enlightenment, this nature of mind remains exactly the same;. it has not changed in any way whatsoever. Realizing or not realizing the nature of mind does not change its identity in any way. That is why the Buddha said our nature is the original wakefulness of the tathagata, endowed with the supreme aspect of all enlightened qualities.

The *Uttara Tantra* uses nine analogies to demonstrate the presence of the buddha nature in the minds of all sentient beings, even when it is not realized. When we do recognize the nature of mind and begin to train in it, we have not achieved something new that was not already present; we have simply realized the existence of something that was already there, something which possesses an unchanging quality.

I will explain one of these nine analogies. Consider a huge cache of gold buried underground for thousands of years, covered by garbage and dirt. During this time, the gold does not fulfill its function; it is not utilized as gold. However, the gold, in itself, is gold. Whether it is discovered or not makes no difference to the fact that its identity is still gold. That identity has not changed and will not change in any way whatsoever.

At some point, a poor man builds his hut on top of this golden treasure. Without enough money to buy food or any basic enjoyments, he suffers terribly. The irony is he does not really have to suffer like this, because his little ramshackle hut is built on top of a huge amount of gold. He does not have to be impoverished at all, but because of not knowing about the gold buried under his house, he goes on suffering.

Then a clairvoyant person happens by and takes a look. He sees this poor person undergoing a great deal of misery. He sees that this suffering is unnecessary because this seemingly poor person could actually be very rich, if he only knew about his own treasure. Feeling great pity, the clairvoyant person tells the poor man, "You are undergoing a lot of misery and pain. You don't have to go through this at all. Just dig into the earth under your house and make use of the gold that is already there." The poor person trusts the other man, follows his advice, discovers the cache of gold and uses it. Afterwards, he lives in great splendor and wealth.

This is an example illustrating the case of all sentient beings, whose nature is the same as that of all the Awakened Ones. There is not the slightest difference whatsoever. Yet, being unaware of this, we create a lot of suffering for ourselves. By taking birth repeatedly among the six classes of sentient beings, we undergo all different kinds of suffering and misery; not just for a short while, but for aeons and aeons. In actuality though, we

do not have to undergo all these painful experiences, because the buddha nature is the basic state of our mind. But we fail to realize it.

When the buddhas look at sentient beings they think, "How sad! How terrible that all living beings suffer this way when there is no real need for it. The very nature of mind of all sentient beings is the enlightened essence – if they would just realize it!" This is what the buddhas try to teach us. They try to point out the nature of our mind so we can realize it and abandon samsara by attaining the state of perfect enlightenment.

Thus, the basic condition of our mind is called 'buddha wisdom' or, literally, the 'awakened state of original wakefulness.' Simultaneous with possessing the buddha nature we experience the various disturbing emotions; feelings of desire, anger, dullness and so forth. This is the case when we are not aware of how this basic condition actually is. On the other hand, the moment of realizing the nature of mind is as the Buddha says in this sutra, "a hollowing-out of desire, a pacification of anger, and a dispeller of stupidity."

These discursive states of mind are, by nature, emptiness which is not comprised of any concrete substance whatsoever. Because of not resting in samadhi, in this natural equanimity, we remain unaware of the true nature of mind. Hence, we allow disturbing emotions, such as strong feelings of desire, to overwhelm us to the extent that we are no longer in charge of our own mind and we lose control. But it does not have to be that way at all. When we are clearly able to see the basic condition of our mind, we realize that just as mind itself lacks any true existence, the emotion of desire also does not possess any true existence.

When we search in this way – "Where is my desire?" – and look for it, we cannot find it as a concrete entity existing outside us, or inside us, or anywhere in between. Neither the perceiving mind nor its desirous attitude is found to exist. In the moment of seeing this, desire loses its strength.

This is what the great master, Ratna Lingpa, meant when he told us to look into the essence of desire and recognize its vivid and cognizant nature: "The fabric of your lustful mind is certainly attachment; but it is the state of empty bliss the moment you sustain it without clinging." The ordinary emotion of desire appears to have immense force and power, but the moment we look into its essence, the desire becomes naturally liberated. The essence, the identity of desire, is seen to be empty and nothing concrete whatsoever. As stated here in this sutra, when this is seen, desire is understood to be hollow and insubstantial.

Similarly, when the nature of mind is seen to be emptiness, all the other disturbing emotions, even the strongest and most overpowering, are also seen to be insubstantial and nonexistent. In exactly the same way, by seeing the nature of mind anger is fully pacified and subsides, because of seeing that anger, as well, is devoid of any true nature.

The sutra explains that the samadhi that hollows out desire is the complete pacification of aggression, and also clarifies and dispels the third poison, dullness. Generally, the Tibetan word *timug* connotes stupidity, dullness, ignorance, and delusion. Desire and anger are easier to recognize, but *timug*, dullness, is harder to identify in personal experience.

According to the *Treasury of Abhidharma*, 'stupidity,' *timug*, and 'ignorance,' *marigpa*, are defined differently. 'Stupidity' refers to being 'obscured, dull and unable to see clearly' while 'ignorance' refers to the fact of 'not knowing' and 'mistakenness.'

The Sutra system distinguishes two types of ignorance: mixed and unmixed, referring to ignorance that is mixed or not mixed with other emotions. 'Mixed ignorance' means that the characteristic of being unaware is experienced together with another emotion. For instance, in the moment of intense desire, our attention gets caught up in the emotion and we seem to lose track of what is right or wrong, confusing what is wholesome and unwholesome. In the same way, when feeling deeply irritated, angry, or aggressive, the mind is overtaken by confusion about whether it is right or wrong, good or evil, to be totally immersed in such an emotion. This shows that inherent to that emotion there is a strong unawareness, an ignorance of what is right or wrong. We make a big mistake because at that point we are totally confused about what is good or evil. This means ignorance, unawareness, is inherent to the emotion. The same goes for the situation of being caught up in the feelings of jealousy, pride or any other of the disturbing emotions; within that state we are prone to confusion and likely to make regrettable mistakes. You can all agree on this. And why do we make mistakes? It is because of the ignorance inherent within an emotionally disturbed state of mind. That was the definition of mixed ignorance.

'Unmixed ignorance' simply refers to ignorance by itself, unaccompanied by any other emotional state. According to the texts and scriptures of *pramana*, logic, there are three types of unmixed ignorance: lack of understanding, misunderstanding and doubt.

'Lack of understanding' means either we have not paid attention to the real condition of things, and therefore we do not know; or, we have

thought about it and tried to understand it but have been unable to understand what is true.

The second type, called 'misunderstanding,' means we have thought about the nature of things and feel a certain degree of conviction, but the conviction we have reached is not in tune with how things really are. We are mistaken and this is called 'misunderstanding.'

The third type, 'doubt,' means we cannot make up our mind about what is true and not true. We vacillate, thinking, "Maybe this is correct, but maybe it is not." This indecision is called 'doubt.'

These three are all forms of 'unmixed ignorance.' This is how it is when our state of mind looks outward through delusion. But the moment mind looks into itself and rests in equanimity, the state of samadhi, we see clearly that ignorance does not exist as any concrete thing whatsoever. It is completely devoid of a substantial separate entity. This naturally empty state is also cognizant. In short, as expressed here in the *King of Samadhi*, seeing our empty essence with a cognizant nature 'dispels stupidity.'

The normal, analytical approach of reasoning in which deduction and inference are used to arrive at understanding is called *sherab*, 'discriminating knowledge.' Sometimes it is also called 'intellectual knowledge.' When we engage in general studies to gain some conviction and definite understanding, intellectual knowledge is very important. But when it comes to the actual and personal practice of the state of samadhi, intellectual knowledge is not helpful at all. We need direct experience. Intellectual knowledge is completely useless for this, because the state of samadhi refers to just letting be in the state of equanimity, without intellectualizing in any way whatsoever. At that moment of samadhi, when personal experience dawns, such descriptions as 'the hollowing out of desire,' 'the full subsiding of anger' and 'the clarification of stupidity' are seen clearly as facts. Through normal intellectual comprehension we will never fully understand what these words mean.

These are just some of the words used in the chapter that is being explained today. There are other expressions as well, which describe the different aspects or qualities inherent to the state of samadhi; altogether, 44 qualities are mentioned. Afterwards, the Buddha expresses these same qualities in poetry. At the conclusion of the poetry are a few lines of direct advice. The Buddha says that he has now fully explained this principle of excellence, meaning the state of samadhi which is the direct seeing of the natural state exactly as it is. However, we should not be satisfied with just having heard and understood the explanation. Unless we apply this to

ourselves and bring it into personal experience, the mere hearing of an explanation will not help much.

To illustrate this, the Buddha uses the example of a very sick person who holds a big bag of medicine in his hand. He does not eat any, he just holds on to it. Is that medicine really going to be beneficial in curing his illness? No, it is not. It is not enough to be sick and hold a bag of medicine. There is no use in that. The medicine must be eaten to be effective. So please understand that the Buddha's teachings are definitely something we must personally apply. And if we do practice his teachings, we will attain the result of fruition.

There is a story from Milarepa's life that illustrates the same meaning. Milarepa took revenge on his enemies by learning black magic, such as how to produce hailstorms. He succeeded in this, but later on he felt great remorse. He thought, "I have attained a precious human body, but if I just remain like this, on top of having created a lot of negative karma, I will leave empty-handed from this precious human life. There is no place else for me to go except to fall into the lower realms. This is certain." He gave rise to strong renunciation and sincerely wished to be liberated.

Milarepa looked around for some place where he could receive the pith instructions on how to reach liberation within that very lifetime. He went to see a master named Rongtön Lhakar and said, "I offer you my body, speech and mind. Please give me food, clothing and teachings. I am a great sinner from Nyima Lhatö. I have killed people, but I wish to be liberated. Please give me the instructions so I can attain buddhahood in this very lifetime." Rongtön Lhakar replied, "Very well. This is not a problem because I have just such a teaching. It is very profound and can bring about enlightenment in one lifetime. Not only that, but when you practice this instruction in the morning, you are a buddha in the morning. When you practice this at night, you are a buddha at night. In fact, one who is a truly worthy and destined individual will attain enlightenment without doing any practice whatsoever. I will give you this instruction, don't worry!"

Milarepa received this teaching and then went to his room. He thought to himself, "I must be one of these very fortunate and destined individuals because when I tried to accomplish black magic, it took me only seven days to succeed. Later, when I produced hailstorms, that took only ten days to accomplish. I must be someone who can become enlightened without any meditation whatsoever." Then, he took it easy and did not do any practice at all. After some time, the master called him in and asked, "What signs of practice have appeared? How have you progressed in your experience?"

Milarepa answered, "I don't have any signs whatsoever. Nothing has happened." The master said, "It seems I was a little too generous with my profound instructions. What you said about yourself was right. You are definitely a great sinner! I don't think I can be of any help to you. As a matter of fact, I can't handle you at all, so I'm sending you to someone else. At Lhodrak, there is a great master named Marpa the Translator. You should go and study with him, instead."

Milarepa went to see Marpa and told him the same story, saying, "I offer you my body, speech and mind. Please give me food, clothing and teachings. I'm a great sinner from Nyima Lhatö. Please give me the instruction to reach buddhahood within this very life!" First Marpa replied, "If you are a great sinner, that is something *you* have done. It is not my doing, so it's your responsibility. Whether or not you achieve buddhahood in one lifetime is totally in your own hands. There is nothing I can do about that. If you are diligent and practice, it is possible to become enlightened in one lifetime. But if you don't practice assiduously, then it is not possible for me to make you enlightened. It is completely in your own hands." When we read about his reaction, it sounds as though Marpa was a little uncompassionate, but Marpa's words were completely true. Attaining enlightenment depends upon our own diligence and exertion in practice, not solely upon the teaching.

This concludes the fourth chapter.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

STUDENT: What is the difference between samadhi in this sutra and the profound meditative concentration which Maitreya's text *Distinguishing Dharmas and Dharmata* mentions as an obstacle to the attainment of buddhahood?

RINPOCHE: The concentrated state of mind that is a hindrance to the omniscient state of wisdom is the meditation which fixates on the notion "I'm meditating! That is my meditation object!" There is something to be kept in mind and a 'me' who is keeping it in mind; therefore, it is a meditation state constructed by notions. Compared with the state of mind of an ordinary person, this meditation is quite good, but it obscures in the sense of preventing realization of the ultimate nature of things.

The basic intent in the *King of Samadhi Sutra* and the Mahamudra pointing-out instruction is to point out the real condition so that we can recognize it. In neither case is intent to give instructions in some type of mind-made meditation state. This type of conceptual meditation is a very

tangible experience that can appear to be 'profound' in the sense that we think what we are keeping in mind is the emptiness of all things. For example, when looking at this table, we think, "What is this table actually? It doesn't possess any self-nature. That is emptiness and I can understand that. This is how it really is! It is emptiness!" Then we keep this conceptual idea in mind. That type of concentration is, when compared to the state of mind of ordinary beings, quite profound and important. But regarding the state of samadhi explained in the *King of Samadhi Sutra*, as well as with what is pointed out in the oral instructions of Mahamudra, such conceptual concentration is a hindrance. In both Mahamudra and the *King of Samadhi Sutra*, what is to be trained in as the samadhi of the view is not a conceptual construct that we have concocted and kept in mind. It is more a matter of looking into the nature of mind and seeing it as it is, then simply letting it naturally be. We rest naturally in that instead of making up some artificial state through our thinking and keeping that in mind. Viewed in this way, any intellectual construct is an obstacle for the wisdom of omniscience.

STUDENT: When you say samadhi, is it the same as the actual state of meditation?

RINPOCHE: Yes, we can say that. In Tibetan, *nyamshag*, the term used to describe the state of meditation literally means 'resting in equanimity.' The tradition of pith instructions outlines two ways of going astray from equanimity: one is called 'straying into the inert essence' and the other is called 'straying into generalizing emptiness.' To generalize emptiness means to plaster the idea of emptiness onto our concept of reality, keeping in mind the mere *idea* that all concrete things are empty. This is an artificial, made-up construct which obscures the state of samadhi.

STUDENT: If the basic nature of mind is emptiness, where does inherent wisdom reside and what is its source?

RINPOCHE: The problem arises when the word 'emptiness' is not clearly explained, so I will explain it. In normal usage, the word 'empty' simply means there is nothing present, like nothing inside an empty cup but empty space. That kind of empty is in the tradition of pith instructions called 'material emptiness,' meaning nothing whatsoever. But this is not what the word 'emptiness' means in the Buddhist context. The emptiness of mind is empty in the sense of not being formed out of any concrete substance whatsoever. But, at the same time, this empty mind can perceive and cognize. It is naturally conscious and can perceive whatever there is. Can you pinpoint this perceiver? No, you cannot, because its essence is empty. The cognizance is not something separate from the empti-

ness. So, you could say that the empty cognizance, the emptiness in this sense, is itself the source of wisdom.

STUDENT: Dullness seems much more subtle than anger or desire. It seems one would therefore have to apply a remedy with is equally subtle. Is dullness what we experience as our normal state of mind? Is it a natural veil that we have to dissolve or see through?

RINPOCHE: We mentioned earlier that dullness, or ignorance, can be either mixed or unmixed. Unmixed ignorance is to either not understand, misunderstand, or to feel doubt. But when we look into what it is that does not understand, misunderstands or feels doubt, we do not find any entity whatsoever. In the moment of discovering this lack of self-entity, there is no longer a dull, ignorant state. Instead, a vivid clarity is present. That vivid wakefulness is what overcomes dullness and stupidity.

STUDENT: At times the nature of mind is seen in a glimpse, just a glimmer of understanding. What is the relation between that moment and the essence of enlightenment?

RINPOCHE: According to the *Uttara Tantra*, the awakened state, the essence of enlightenment, means to fully realize the innate nature of things – dharmata. The example used here compares it to a newborn infant lying inside a room. The sun is shining outside and a few rays of sunlight seep in through the window. The child sees the sunlight, yet, being a newborn infant, he cannot walk outside and see the real sun itself. Nevertheless, he does perceive the few sunbeams seeping into the room. As the child grows older and can walk outside, he will see the sun, itself. Is there any link between the sunlight seen by the newborn baby and the real sun? Definitely there is a strong link between the sunlight and the sun, though the infant does not see the real sun itself. As the child grows up and can walk outside, he will eventually see the real sun.

In the same way, the glimpse of understanding, the flash of insight that you talk about is like the sunlight shining in through the window. There is a strong link between this and the state of enlightenment, but it is not the state of enlightenment itself. We should diligently train in our meditation practice to fully realize this state, so please do that!

STUDENT: Can one ever attain samadhi through tranquillity meditation or insight meditation, or are these just techniques to bring you to the point where you can eventually attain samadhi?

RINPOCHE: That is an individual matter which depends on how diligent a person is. Some people practice and train in shamatha and vipashyana and realize the state of samadhi. Other people, who are a little lazy and do

not fully apply themselves, do not. Nevertheless, in the future, whatever training we have done will act as a support for realization. Later in this sutra, both shamatha and vipashyana will be clearly described. Whether through these practices we realize the state of samadhi depends on ourselves.

THE NATURE OF SAMADHI

Yesterday, while covering the fourth chapter on the principle of samadhi and how to cultivate it, someone asked, "What is the difference between shamatha and vipashyana, stillness and insight, and the state of samadhi mentioned here in the *King of Samadhi Sutra*?" My answer to this question may not have been very clear, so today there will be a further explanation of this topic.

The corresponding Tibetan words for the Sanskrit terms shamatha and vipashyana are *shiney*, which means 'stillness' or 'tranquillity,' and *lhagtong*, which means 'insight' or 'clear seeing.' Both derive from Sanskrit and have a very broad range of usage throughout many religious systems, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist. For instance, as the Hindu yogic traditions use Sanskrit terminology, you may hear these exact same terms in the Hindu context – that someone is training in shamatha and vipashyana. An uninformed person might therefore conclude that because the Hindu practitioners train in shamatha and vipashyana, this training is exactly the same approach we use as Buddhists. But this is not the case; in fact, there is an enormous difference. Although the words are the same, the meaning is entirely different.

Furthermore, even within the different schools of Buddhist practice the terms vary in their meaning. For example, in the Theravadin tradition, which mainly uses the Pali language, the Pali words for shamatha and vipashyana are almost the same: samatta and vipassanna. We may therefore believe that because the words are similar the practices of shamatha and vipashyana according to the Theravadin tradition are identical with that of the Vajrayana traditions, but this is not the case. Differences exist regarding both the connotations and the instructions in training in the practices of shamatha and vipashyana.

In short, the practices of shamatha and vipashyana mentioned in the *King of Samadhi Sutra* are not the same as those practiced in the non-Buddhist Hindu yogic tradition, and not even the same as those practiced in the Theravadin tradition.

Moreover, within the teachings of the Greater Vehicle, Mahayana, there is a wide range of meanings regarding the practices of shamatha and vipashyana. There is the general approach and the specific approach; a further difference lies in the practice instructions. So, is there then any difference between the shamatha and vipashyana practiced according to the Mahamudra system and the samadhi described in this sutra? No, there is no difference. They are exactly the same.

According to this sutra, the meaning of samadhi and the meditation state which we train in through the instructions of Mahamudra are exactly the same, but there is a semantic difference. Sutra terminology is used in the general teachings, in which the actual extraordinary depth of meaning of the practice is somewhat concealed. It is not like the Mahamudra system, where the hidden intent of this sutra is fully revealed. In the Mahamudra system the master gives key instructions to the disciple in a very direct way that facilitates the student's immediate application of the meaning within his or her own experience. The student is told, "First, you should train in exactly this, then in exactly that, and then, such and such will follow." This is a very clear and direct approach. The difference lies in how the instructions are imparted, but the identity of samadhi is exactly the same. Thus, the fourth chapter of the *King of Samadhi Sutra* describes the identity of the samadhi and how to train in it.

CHAPTER 5

Once again the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror said to Youthful Moonlight: "Youthful one, this being so, a bodhisattva mahasattva who aspires to this samadhi and who wishes to quickly awaken truly and fully to unexcelled true and complete enlightenment should thoroughly train in this samadhi. Youthful one, how should he thoroughly train in samadhi for that purpose? Youthful one, such a bodhisattva mahasattva should, with a mind full of great compassion, in front of a living tathagata or to all those passed into nirvana, exert himself in making offerings of Dharma robes, alms, bedding, medicine, and other articles; of flowers, incense, scent, garlands, perfume, and fragrant powder; of

garments, parasols, banners, and pennants of victory; of music from cymbals and bells; and then thoroughly dedicate the virtue of that to the attainment of samadhi."

"He should not make offerings to the tathagatas while hoping for anything whatsoever, but should do so intent on the Dharma, without hoping for something desirable, without hoping for any enjoyment, without hoping for the higher realms, and without hoping for some samsaric state. Since, with such hoping, one doesn't behold the tathagata as being the dharmakaya, how can one possibly behold him as the form-body (rupakaya)?"

"Youthful one, the way to make offerings to the tathagatas is without imagining the tathagatas, without conceiving of oneself, and without hoping for the karmic ripening [to occur]. If you worship the tathagatas through this offering of threefold purity, you will fully attain this samadhi and awaken truly and fully to unexcelled true and complete enlightenment."

In the fifth chapter of the *King of Samadhi Sutra*, called "Melodious Splendor," Buddha Shakyamuni relates the story of one of his previous lives as a world ruler named Great Strength. During that lifetime he met a buddha named Melodious Splendor who had appeared in the world. The main point of this story is that, feeling strong faith and devotion toward this buddha, Great Strength made tremendous offerings of many different articles, including Dharma robes, medicines, food, drink, and a dwelling place, thus gathering great merit. Seeing the king's example, his ministers and subjects also made enormous offerings and accrued great merit. Yet, at some point, the buddha Melodious Splendor, perceived that the motivation with which the ministers and subjects made their offerings was not necessarily a direct cause for attaining the unsurpassable state of perfect enlightenment, because they had not had the opportunity for authentic Dharma practice. So Buddha Melodious Splendor gave a teaching in which he clearly defined their shortcoming and the means of amending it, saying, "It is of course a great fortune that you make offerings, but that in itself is not enough for genuine Dharma practice." Upon hearing this discourse, Great Strength and his ministers and subjects understood the true Dharma – how to train in the state of samadhi – and were able to attain accomplishment. This is a story related in the fifth chapter of our sutra.

The main principle of this chapter demonstrates that correct motivation is indispensable. Our motive should, in fact, be extraordinary. Mediocre motivation is insufficient because it will not lead to complete enlighten-

ment. As Mahamudra practitioners, within the Vajrayana system, we find that the way to generate and train in such extraordinary motivation is embodied within the preliminary practices. There are two approaches. One way is to make sure that we rise above the inferior paths by choosing the exalted path of Mahayana through forming the bodhisattva resolve; in other words, generating bodhichitta. The other way is to make sure that, through taking refuge in the Three Jewels, we do not take a perverted path.

Once we have contemplated the defects of samsaric existence and developed 'renunciation,' the sincere wish to be free from the miseries of delusion, the first part of the special preliminary practices involves forming the wish to enter a true path. We then seek the true, unmistaken path and embark upon it. Such an unmistaken path requires placing our complete trust in the perfectly Enlightened One, the Buddha, as the teacher and main object of refuge. Also, we place our trust in the oral instructions he gave as the path, and in the noble sangha, those who uphold and practice those teachings, as our companions on the path. By taking refuge in the precious Buddha, precious Dharma and precious Sangha, we are rescued from following perverted paths. This is why we often hear, "taking refuge ensures we take the correct path." When applying this, we chant the lines for taking refuge 100,000 times, and stabilize the attitude of taking refuge by at the same time making 100,000 prostrations. This constitutes the first section of the special preliminary practices.

Next, we take the bodhisattva vow to rise above an inferior path. Of course, it is good to start Dharma practice, but the primary fact is that we have been roaming about in samsaric existence for countless lifetimes, and have therefore developed the habit of thinking only about our own welfare. When we begin Dharma practice, it is our natural tendency to want to practice and achieve something solely for our own benefit. This is fine insofar as it is good to engage ourselves in spiritual practice, but on the other hand, this attitude is not perfect. By sustaining such a motivation, which is limited to self-benefit, we will never be able to achieve the great enlightened qualities through which we can benefit all other sentient beings. We need to expand our attitude, or else we remain on an inferior path.

Rather than practicing solely for oneself or for the benefit of a limited number of others, whether it be ten, one hundred, one thousand, ten thousand, one hundred thousand, one million or even a billion others, we should aim the benefit of our spiritual practice at the welfare of sentient beings who are equal in number to the infinity of space. Then we

will be able to achieve what is called the unsurpassed state of complete and perfect enlightenment and will, indeed, be able to benefit all other sentient beings, as many as the sky is vast.

In order to achieve this, we should direct our minds towards the welfare all other beings who wish to enjoy pleasure and happiness and to be free from pain, but who, as ignorant sentient beings, do not know how to create the cause for such happiness and how to not suffer. Form this thought: "I, who have the great fortune of having entered the gate of the Buddha's teachings, have learned how to create the causes of happiness and how to avoid the causes of pain. I understand what is right and wrong, what is good and evil, and am able to practice the authentic Dharma. I will progress towards liberation and enlightenment, and in the future will fulfill the wishes of all sentient beings, as numerous as the sky is vast. I will be able to protect them from suffering, and will establish all of them in perfect happiness!" This attitude is called 'forming the resolve aimed at supreme enlightenment.'

It is only right that we should direct the fruit of our practice toward the benefit of all other sentient beings. To remind ourselves of this motivation and to train in it daily, at the conclusion of the special preliminary practices of taking refuge and performing prostrations, we take the bodhisattva vow and bring the superior motivation of a bodhisattva clearly to mind, thus transcending an inferior attitude.

CHAPTER 6

Chapter Six is called "Thoroughly Training in Samadhi." When we train in samadhi we should experience some progress. This entails removing the obstacles to remaining in samadhi as well as increasing the strength of the practice. This is accomplished by accumulating a vast amount of merit and by purifying our karmic misdeeds and obscurations. The Buddha describes the making of lavish offerings of musical instruments, banners, parasols, canopies and so forth. When making offerings, we should be free from any ambition to enjoy their results as the temporary pleasures of samsara's higher realms. Rather, we should dedicate the outcome of the offerings towards authentic Dharma practice, the attainment of complete and perfect enlightenment. In the same chapter, the Buddha also mentions the importance of patience and of training in forbearance in the face of negative circumstances when trying to apply the sublime teachings.

KING OF SAMADHI

As I have mentioned earlier, the way we can personally apply the gathering of a vast accumulation of merit by making offerings, is done by visualizing all the luxuries and enjoyments of this world system and presenting them as a traditional mandala offering, as is done during the mandala part of the special preliminary practices.

What causes negative circumstances or obstacles in training in samadhi? These difficulties or hindrances are the results of negative actions we have committed within this lifetime and throughout all of our past lives throughout beginningless samsara. The effect of these karmic misdeeds obstructs our practice of the Dharma and training in samadhi during this life. In order to progress and achieve thorough training in the state of samadhi it is very important to try to purify these misdeeds and obscurations. In short, we need to purify our dense veil of disturbing emotions.

In general, purification is carried out by means of the four remedial powers, which are found within the extraordinary preliminaries of Mahamudra. These four powers are applied in a most profound and extraordinary way when engaging in the Vajrasattva practice which removes unfavorable circumstances that impede samadhi.

In this practice, we visualize Buddha Vajrasattva, in his brilliant white form, poised above the crown of our head. Supplicating him with strong faith, we then imagine that, from the 100-syllable mantra in his heart-center, a stream of nectar begins to flow downward and enters the crown of our head. While the nectar flows throughout our body, we imagine that all negative karmic deeds created in past lives, all negative circumstances and obstacles, and all obscurations, sicknesses, evil influences and so forth are totally purified. This is called the downpour of purifying nectar. We can compare this visualization that clears away disharmonious factors, misdeeds and obscurations with the intent of this chapter, which is to thoroughly train in the state of samadhi, to progress, and to remove hindrances.

CHAPTER 7

Once again the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror spoke to Youthful Moonlight: "Youthful one, this being so, the bodhisattva mahasattva who aspires to this samadhi and who wishes to quickly awaken truly and fully to unexcelled true and complete enlightenment should be skilled in the wisdom of the three types of patience. He should fully understand the first type of patience; he

should fully understand the second type of patience; he should fully understand the third type of patience; and thus be skilled in the differences between the three types of patience."

Chapter Seven, entitled "Engaging in Patience," describes the necessity of being patient. Here, the Buddha mentions that we should be skilled in the wisdom of the three types of patience. The 'first patience' is necessary when we diligently exert ourselves in gathering the accumulation of merit for the sake of authentic Dharma practice and through training in the state of samadhi. It is necessary to be extremely diligent.

According to the general system of the sutras of the Mahayana vehicle, we should have the fortitude to engage in the training of a bodhisattva, to gather the accumulation of merit, to train in samadhi, to seek teachings and so forth for many aeons, in order to reach the fruition of buddhahood. But, according to our Vajrayana system, it is not necessary to spend many aeons practicing, since there exist profound instructions through which we can attain the state of complete enlightenment within this same body and lifetime.

To attain complete enlightenment within one lifetime is only possible if we apply ourselves wholeheartedly with the most perfect type of exertion to the authentic practice of the Dharma. If we fail to do so, it is very difficult to become enlightened. Therefore, great diligence is said here to be extremely important.

We can find a detailed account of such diligence in the biography of the great practitioner, Milarepa. He underwent immense hardship, through which he was able to awaken to complete enlightenment in that very lifetime. Someone who is not diligent or who dislikes undertaking any hardship will not easily attain such a result. Also, we can read the life story of the mahasiddha, Naropa, which narrates the great trials and hardships he underwent to reach a high level of accomplishment. These stories show us how we personally must exert ourselves in Dharma practice.

We should understand the definite need to wholeheartedly exert ourselves. Otherwise we will begin to doubt. During one of my journeys abroad, a man came to me and said, "Rinpoche, seven years ago I entered the gate of Dharma and became a Buddhist. Since that time nothing has happened; there are no signs of progress or special qualities arising. Maybe I have no real karmic link with the Buddha's teachings. I'm thinking that perhaps I should try to find some other spiritual practice to pursue. What do you think?" My reply was, "There is nothing wrong with the Buddha's teachings. The problem does not lie there. The problem lies in

that you expect to have some sign of progress due to merely having become a Buddhist seven years ago. There is no benefit in just letting time pass by. What is lacking is diligence. People who really apply themselves to practice do so in a slightly different way than how you have proceeded. Over the course of seven years, you have not even finished the 100,000 prostrations. How can you expect to have any signs of progress? It is actually not such a great hardship to complete the set number of prostrations. People who really apply themselves can finish 100,000 prostrations in 30 days. Maybe it is your own diligence that is lacking, not something lacking in the teachings. If you expect to have signs of progress from not doing any practice, I'm sorry to disappoint you, but it simply doesn't happen. The Buddhist way is not to keep score of the number of years, but to put effort into practicing the Dharma."

Later on, this person returned to me and said, "What you told me is true. I agree." It is very often the case that when people feel there is not much effect from their practice, it is due to not really applying themselves. The problem is a shortage of diligence and wholehearted application. Without these it is impossible to have signs of progress and the manifestation of enlightened qualities. It just doesn't happen!

Some people may feel that, lacking the right circumstances such as free time or provisions, they are unable to practice in a one-pointed way and, therefore, will not engender either progress or enlightened qualities. We should not discourage ourselves or feel disheartened due to these circumstances. Why? Because the practice of Buddhism is rather different from attending university classes. Going to a university means devoting a set number of years of our life to study. At the end of that period, we are either granted a degree or not. By graduating, we reap the outcome of all the effort, time, money and energy that we invested. But if we do not receive a degree, instead we will feel all those years were wasted.

Buddhist practice is not like this. We simply practice the Dharma. And while spending our time practicing, if signs of accomplishment occur indicating progress, that is fine and even exceedingly good. But if we do not manifest any special signs of accomplishment, that is also fine. It simply does not matter, because we have still created a great amount of merit. Something positive and valuable is created, even within a short moment of practice. The Buddha said that someone with sincere appreciation and strong faith towards the qualities of enlightenment will join the palms and bow the head as a sign of deep respect when seeing the image of the Buddha. However, someone who has no sincere appreciation but only feels the Buddha is okay will only raise one hand and bow the head slightly.

The Buddha was then asked, "Is there any benefit from just raising one hand and slightly bowing the head." He said, "Yes, solely from that moment of showing a gesture of respect, an immense amount of merit is created. That moment of merit will carry on so that, at some point in the future, it will lead to the state of complete enlightenment." Therefore, we need not discourage ourselves. It is fine if we can practice a lot and attain a great state of accomplishment, but even to practice a little bit is also very fortunate. Yet, if we really want to attain the manifest qualities of realization and samadhi, we must be extremely diligent.

The first type of patience is simply to endure the hardship of engaging in Dharma practice in a general way. The second type of patience is the acceptance of hardship in the special practice of samadhi. Samadhi is of many types: there are the general types of meditation states, like shamatha and vipashyana according to the Mahamudra system. Additionally, there are the special Vajrayana practices, which include the extraordinary methods called *utpattikrama* and *sampannakrama*, the development stage and completion stage. The development stage involves visualizing the form of the deity while reciting the mantra. The completion stage is the extraordinary form of shamatha and vipashyana. To bear the hardship involved in training in these incredible practices is the second type of patience.

The third type of patience is the patience needed when teaching the Dharma to others. Having entered the gate of the Buddhadharma, studied the teachings for many years, trained in them and gained some degree of personal experience in samadhi, whether we have given rise to special qualities or not, we should have the motivation that the outcome of what we have learned or practiced should be of benefit to other beings. We should be willing to share and teach others. When doing so, there will come a time when others will be able to trust in what we say. At other times, they will not believe what we say. Sometimes it will seem that the Dharmic words we speak benefit others; sometimes it will seem that they do not. All different situations can arise. Yet, whatever the case may be – whether people believe or not, whether they seem benefited or not – we should be able to endure any situation that occurs. That kind of acceptance is the third type of patience mentioned here.

When we interact with others, it is unavoidable that people will sometimes try to deceive us, cheat us, hurt our feelings, or show lack of appreciation and respect. When that happens we may be filled with anger, unable to bear such opposition. But it is extremely important to try to be forbearing. Why is that? Because this is how people are. Sentient beings are not fully enlightened buddhas, nor are they great bodhisattvas. Being

ordinary samsaric persons, they possess the disturbing emotions of attachment, desire, anger, delusion, conceit, and jealousy. Therefore, it follows that they are selfish and deceitful and cannot be expected to behave like a buddha or a bodhisattva. It will happen that they will try to harm, hurt, or cheat us, whatever. There is nothing unusual about that; it is just the natural characteristic of samsaric existence. When we face being harmed by others, we should not dwell on the thoughts, "That person is harming me" or "That person cheated me" or "That person became angry at me" or "This isn't right!" Because we are unable to bear this we give rise to anger. Instead, we should try to train in accepting the hurt or harm inflicted by others. That is the training of patience.

As the great bodhisattva Shantideva said, "If someone puts his hand into fire, what happens? The hand is burned. Is that the fault of the flames? No, it is just the natural quality of fire to burn, and it doesn't help to be angry at the fire. The fault lies with the person who puts his or her hand into the flames." Therefore, if we, as Dharma practitioners, interact with other people who as ordinary, samsaric, unenlightened beings naturally possess negative characteristics, we should simply understand that that is how things are in samsaric existence. We should be able to acknowledge that that is how things are and see that those characteristics exist, but not dwell on the idea that we ourselves are harmed or that other people are trying to oppose us. Any ego-centered resentment on our part is not their fault but our own. We must train in bearing this, which is the third kind of patience.

That covers the seventh chapter on training in patience. Questions and doubts can be cleared up now.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

STUDENT: Regarding the third kind of patience, you mentioned the example of the fire and the hand. You said it is the nature of people in samsaric existence to be evil. How does this relate to the pure perception we are supposed to have regarding other Dharma practitioners?

RINPOCHE: The principle mentioned here is simply to accept that other people do have disturbing emotions; they do become angry and proud and so on. There is nothing special about that. It is simply acknowledging how things appear to be. Pure perception or 'sacred outlook,' on the other hand, is to appreciate the basic state, the real condition of things which is that the sugata-garbha, the enlightened essence or buddha nature, is present within everyone, within all beings. From that angle, even though peo-

ple are obscured by emotions of anger, pride, jealousy and so forth, at that very moment their basic nature is still identical with all buddhas and bodhisattvas. It is from that standpoint that we should appreciate or perceive all males as dakas and females as dakinis, and so train in pure perception.

By keeping in mind the Sutra position that all beings are endowed with the enlightened potential of the buddha nature, it is taught that we automatically eliminate five major faults. The first of the five faults is the fault of becoming discouraged, thinking, "I am unable to attain buddhahood. I cannot practice like the great masters of the past. I cannot do what Milarepa and Marpa did." It is possible to be disheartened in this way, but we do not really need to be. Why not? Because, whether we speak of Jetsun Milarepa or Marpa Lotsawa, it is a fact that everyone has buddha nature. Since we have the same nature, the fact that they practiced and attained supreme accomplishment in the same body and lifetime proves that we can as well. If we really apply ourselves diligently with one-pointed exertion, we can realize the common and supreme accomplishments within one body and life. Thus, we need never become discouraged or disheartened. Everyone has the same potential.

The second fault that is removed through keeping in mind that everyone has buddha nature, is that of disparaging others. Sometimes we may feel that someone is useless – they do not know anything and never do any Dharma practice. Yet, if we understand that this person has exactly the same potential as we have, and as buddhas and bodhisattvas have, then we cannot honestly belittle them because they also have the capacity to become enlightened. That fits very well with pure perception, in the ultimate sense. And in a temporary sense, we can endeavor to tolerate it when other people manifest disturbing emotions and try to cheat or harm us. We can still be patient. There is no conflict or contradiction between being patient and having pure perception.

STUDENT: Some of my students are not necessarily Buddhist and they think the idea of accumulating merit is very strange. They ask me, "Why should the acts of making offerings, doing circumambulations, and so on create anything at all?" I don't feel that I answer them well. They also say, "It is it even stranger to think that, having done these things, you can give the merit away." Even though I personally feel this is a funny question, I would like it if you would explain in detail how it works, in a way that I can explain to my students.

RINPOCHE: First of all, you cannot really blame others for not understanding. They haven't studied or tried to understand the cause and effect of

karmic deeds, and therefore don't understand the principle of gathering or creating merit. You should start with explaining the ripening of karmic actions, the different types of cause and effect of karma. The effect of some karmic actions ripen in the same life, while others manifest only in a future life.

Take the example of Prince Charles, who was born as Queen Elizabeth's son. Why was he born as her son? It was only possible through his own good karma. There is no one who issued the decree, "He is allowed to be the Prince of England and you are not allowed to be born in that position." No one makes this decision. It is the automatic result of people's individual karmic accumulation created from the past. He had somehow gathered the merit to become Prince of England while other people did not. In the same way, when we see children dying of starvation in Africa, it raises the question, "Why were they born in Africa? Why do they have to suffer this way?" It is because they were reborn as human beings at this particular time and place in Africa. Did anyone force them to be reborn there? Did someone say, "Now you must be reborn in a place in Africa where you will starve to death"? No, no one forces living beings to be reborn in this way. The fact that people are born into such circumstances is because of lacking merit. From that standpoint, it is definitely very important to accumulate merit. Having merit, one can be born the Prince of England; lacking merit, one may be born as a starving child in Africa. Think about this and see that there is a definite need to create merit.

Dedicating or sharing merit is something we should always train in at the conclusion of any spiritual practice. We should imagine that whatever good may arise from our practice we share or distribute to all other beings for the general welfare of everyone. What is the use of that? Some people may inject hope and fear into this, perhaps expecting that by dedicating the merit to a sick friend, he or she will be cured and happy. This will not necessarily happen right at that moment. It is not that we can do some good action right now and the result will immediately be transferred to the other person so that he or she is freed from their bad karma. Cause and effect are not directly and immediately linked in this way.

We need not get caught up in a lot of hope and expectations. On the other hand, some people may fear, "If I wish the merit 'I' have created through 'my' practice to ripen on other beings, it will all be wasted and I myself will have nothing left." We need not become involved in expecting too much or fearing too much. There really is not anything to have hope

or fear about, because each person will reap exactly what he or she has sown.

Merit is dedicated to cultivate our altruistic attitude, to develop pure intent. Rather than clinging selfishly to the frame of mind which thinks, "This is *my* merit; I need it *myself*," make the wish, "May whatever good I have created be for the welfare of everyone," without any particular focal point. This is training in a pure attitude. Growing accustomed to and training in this pure motivation of dedicating the merit will ensure that at some point when we are really able to benefit others, we will do so in a very open and vast way. The benefit to others does not immediately manifest in the same moment of dedicating the merit. But the effect of the dedication will eventually manifest for the welfare of others. So at the present moment there is nothing to hope or fear about.

STUDENT: When one recognizes the empty nature of disturbing emotions, they liberate themselves. In my own experience, I just put the concept of emptiness onto the disturbing emotion, which does not make it disappear. How can we deal with disturbing emotions when we are only at the stage of conceptualizing emptiness, which does not have the ability to make disturbing emotions vanish?

RINPOCHE: What you lack is the 'pointing-out instruction,' the teaching that enables you to recognize the nature of your mind. Not having recognized the natural state, you cannot expect disturbing emotions to be controlled or self-liberated. You should try your best to receive the pointing-out instruction to recognize the nature of mind, so that your recognition of emptiness can overcome disturbing emotions. Recognizing emptiness deals with disturbing emotions by cutting them at the root and totally eliminating them, not just superimposing the concept 'emptiness' on them. That approach is not very effective, as you quite rightly said, in overcoming a disturbing emotion. The only thing that really helps is to directly perceive the nature of mind within the disturbing emotion: this can overcome and liberate it.

If we have not yet recognized the nature of mind through the pointing-out instruction, we should instead make use of various remedies. One of them is to keep our distance from involvement in disturbing emotions. Right now, we become immediately caught up in them, which is not keeping our distance but getting close. Something is wrong with this, because when we are blindly involved in disturbing emotions we become confused and carried away and create negative actions which will cause us to suffer. Understanding this and contemplating the faults of becoming caught up in disturbing emotions on a daily basis, we will become less fond of getting totally involved with them. The lack of enthusiasm will help us keep our distance. This occurs through daily training in reminding ourselves that, "Yes, I do have a lot of disturbing emotions. I get angry, attached, proud, jealous and stupid. This is no good, but brings me innumerable problems. It also causes trouble for other people." Reminding ourselves of this, we will keep more and more distance and become less enmeshed in disturbing emotions. This is very important for the time being.

On the other hand, it is possible when getting angry to see ourselves as a brave warrior and regard the disturbing emotion as a virtue; doing so only increases the emotion. Definitely, understand that disturbing emotions are unvirtuous. Gradually, as your meditation improves and you have the nature of mind pointed out and recognize it, you will be able to control your disturbing emotions through the direct experience of emptiness.

The Insubstantial Identity of All Things

Once again the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror spoke to Youthful Moonlight: "Youthful one, this being so, the bodhisattva mahasattva who aspires to this samadhi and who wishes to quickly awaken truly and fully to unexcelled true and complete enlightenment should be skilled in the wisdom (that sees) the insubstantial identity of all things."

"Youthful one, how should a bodhisattva mahasattva be skilled in the wisdom of the insubstantial identity of all things? Youthful one, the bodhisattva mahasattva should understand that all things are insubstantial, without identity, devoid of characteristics, without attributes, unproduced, unceasing, beyond words, empty, tranquil from the beginning, and utterly pure by nature ..."

"Youthful one, the bodhisattva mahasattva who is skilled in the wisdom of the insubstantial identity of all things does not hanker for, is not averse towards, and does not remain dull before any form, sound, smell, taste, texture or any mental object. Why is this? It is because he doesn't truly behold any thing, doesn't apprehend any thing, ..."

"The one who does not truly behold or apprehend any thing is unattached to the three realms of samsara and will thus quickly attain this samadhi. He will quickly awaken truly and fully to unexcelled true and complete enlightenment."

Chapter 8

Today we have come to the eighth chapter of the *King of Samadhi Sutra*, which bears the title "Resulting from Insubstantiality." At times the perfectly enlightened one, Buddha Shakyamuni, would teach in terms of relative truth – that all things do have substance, that there is the 'virtuous substance' of merit which we can and should create, and that there is the 'unvirtuous substance' of demerit which we must abandon. And unless we avoid creating the demeritorious substance of negative actions we will surely experience their unpleasant results in this life or in following lives. When we do create the meritorious substance of virtuous actions we will, either in the same lifetime or later on, gradually attain the result of virtue, which is pleasure and happiness. This is the content of one set of teachings; this is part of the Wheel of Dharma the Buddha set in motion.

To people with strong attachment to a solid reality, who consider phenomena to have a lasting and substantial existence, the perfect Buddha taught that phenomena are devoid of self-entities and that the individual self also does not exist. Thus, the Buddha established the empty nature of all things.

In which sutras did the Buddha teach about emptiness and the insubstantial nature of all things? He did so in the Prajnaparamita scriptures. These scriptures exist in various lengths, the most extensive being the Hundred Thousand Verses, the Twenty-five Thousand Scripture, the Prajnaparamita in Eight Thousand Verses, and so forth. In terms of brevity, he taught the *Sutra on the Heart of Transcendent Knowledge*. In these discourses the Buddha demonstrated that all phenomena are devoid of a self-nature. Sometimes this was expressed in terms of the sixteen aspects of emptiness, stating the emptiness of outer things, emptiness of the inner, emptiness of emptiness, and so on. In the *Heart Sutra* we hear statements such as "In emptiness there is no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body ...," thus showing that the nature of all things is emptiness.

Why did the Buddha teach that all things are emptiness? Right now, we are in samsaric existence, and in terms of the effects of karmic misdeeds, we do suffer and have painful experiences. These painful circumstances are caused by disturbing emotions. The question then arises, "Do we really have to undergo pain and suffering?" The answer is, "No, we don't." Is it possible to avoid or abandon suffering? Is it possible to abandon the cause of suffering, which is disturbing emotions? Yes, it is possible. Why is it possible to abandon both the cause of disturbing emotions and their resultant pain and suffering? It is possible because the disturb-

ing emotions and the feeling of suffering are both devoid of any true existence whatsoever. Both are emptiness. It is possible to abandon these by realizing that their nature is empty and devoid of any substantiality. If they were something real and concrete, we could not free ourselves of the causes, our disturbing emotions, and their effects, the painful states of samsaric existence. But we can free ourselves, simply because they are by nature devoid of any substantial identity.

For example, let's say we are some place where a large multicolored rope is lying in the grass. The light is dim and perhaps our eyesight is not very good. For some reason, we give rise to the mistaken belief or wrong idea that this rope lying in the grass is a big snake. We immediately become terrified, thinking, "Maybe this snake will bite me. It's dangerous. If I'm bitten, it will hurt and I may even die!" We are then overcome with fear. How do we dispel this fear? All that is necessary is to simply realize what the object is to begin with. It's not a snake, but a multicolored rope. Seeing that and understanding what it really is, the fear naturally vanishes.

In the same way, fear, worry, pain and disturbing emotions are all characteristic of samsaric existence. How can we eliminate these? Since from the very outset fear, pain and disturbing emotions have never really existed to begin, with it would be very difficult to use some kind of method to remove them. They have no concrete or substantial nature whatsoever.

This is what the Buddha, out of his great compassion and skillful means, demonstrated by teaching that all things are empty and devoid of any substantial nature. As followers of the Buddha's teachings we should closely inspect them, and train ourselves in understanding what is meant by the statement that 'all things have the nature of emptiness.' By recognizing that, we are able to experience things as they truly are. Then all the worry, pain and disturbing emotions naturally vanish. With continued training, we will be able to attain the ultimate fruition.

Sometimes the Buddha placed a very strong emphasis on understanding emptiness – that all phenomena are empty of self-nature. He repeatedly stated the importance of understanding this. At other times the Buddha taught the importance of avoiding the causes of suffering, and how to create merit and produce the causes for happiness. In this chapter the Buddha says, "If you," referring to the mahabodhisattvas, bodhisattvas or any one of us, "wish to truly and perfectly awaken to the unsurpassable state of perfect and complete enlightenment, what should you do? You should become skilled in the wisdom that sees the insubstantial identity of all things." In other words, if we wish to quickly become enlightened, we

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should correctly understand how all things are empty of an independent nature. We should really experience that and truly train in it as well.

According to the style of the sutras, Lord Buddha also accompanies this direct and profound disclosure with a story. During one of his past lives, a very extraordinary Buddha appeared, named Arisen from the Insubstantial. He extensively taught the insubstantial nature of all things, the view of the Middle Way, that all things are emptiness. At that time, Lord Buddha was born as a bodhisattva named Great Compassion. He served, followed and received teachings on the insubstantial nature of all things from Arisen from the Insubstantial. In doing so, Great Compassion created immense merit and for one thousand great aeons was secure from rebirth in the three lower realms. He also attained a very high state of realization.

In the sutras the Buddha simply proclaims, "All things are emptiness," and does not necessarily explain why this is so. Many great masters have taught how we can gain some degree of conviction about the empty nature of all things through inference, deduction, and intelligent investigation. Pursuing various systems of reasoning and analysis, such as the analysis of cause and effect and the analysis of identity, by studying great masters such as Nagarjuna, Chandrakirti, and Shantideva, we can gain some clear conviction that things are empty. We come to the understanding that our experience is not real and concrete as it seems to be. By learning and reflecting in accordance with the manner of these masters' great treatises, we are able to engender clear confidence and certainty that the nature of things is actually empty. Further inquiry will reveal this is not merely some theory we have heard about which asserts that this is how things are. Through our own intelligence, we can arrive at a deep understanding that all things are, in fact, empty and devoid of the substantiality we usually attribute to them.

Even though we call ourselves Vajrayana practitioners and train in the state of samadhi, it is very important to use intelligent reasoning to feel certain and confident about the empty nature of all things. Why? Because we should possess two qualities – the quality of being 'independent of other people's statements,' and the quality of being 'unswayed by what others assert.'

Being independent of statements made by others means our understanding of emptiness should not merely depend upon our acceptance of whatever the Buddha stated as true. We need to discern and decide for ourselves, or else we are dependent upon the statements of others and lack clarity.

'Remaining unswayed by what others assert' means that you do not necessarily accept it if someone approaches you and alleges, "The Buddha's statements were wrong. All things are *not* empty, and if you believe that the nature of things is emptiness, you are totally mistaken." If they proclaim their reasons and you think, "Well, that sounds quite true," that is called 'being swayed by what others assert.' However, we should be able to respond immediately, saying, "No, what you say is untrue. Regardless of whether the Buddha said that all things are empty, I have arrived at the same understanding and I can say that in fact they are empty."

These two qualities, 'remaining independent of statements made by others' and 'remaining unswayed by what other people assert,' arise from having spent time investigating by means of intelligent reasoning and from gaining a thorough conviction of emptiness through this process.

Many kinds of reasoning and explanations of emptiness have been taught, as, for instance, in Nagarjuna's treatise *Entering the Middle Way*. Some explanations are quite complicated, but to make it very simple we will now use a kind of reasoning called the 'analysis of all things being dependent,' showing that all things are merely perceived to be dependent upon something other, while in themselves they lack any true, independent existence. Here, I will show you an example: look at these two sticks of incense (Rinpoche holds them up). One stick is long, while the other is short. Everyone will agree that the first stick is long and not short, while the second stick is short and definitely not long. We can all accept this as true. Right? So, it now seems to us that the first stick is truly and genuinely 'long' and that the second stick is truly and genuinely 'short.' Correct?

(Rinpoche now picks up a third, longer incense stick and holds it next to the first stick). Now, what happened? Now, no one will call the first stick, which we previously said was 'long,' 'long' anymore. We will now call the first stick 'short.' But if we have a single incense stick, all by itself, no one can say if it is 'long' or 'short.' We cannot say anything about it.

What should we understand through this example? That things, in themselves, do not possess any such attributes as being 'short' or 'long.' It is only our own thoughts that impose the labels of 'short' or 'long' onto things. These concepts come into being when one object is compared with another. In other words, such concepts are dependent, one upon the other. Things, in themselves, are empty of such labels as being 'short' or 'long.'

We have two types of truth evident here – what is really true and what is superficially true. In terms of ultimate truth, we cannot claim that anything, in itself, is either short or long or possesses any such attributes; all

things are empty of characteristics. Yet, in terms of relative truth, for sure one object is longer than the other so that one object is 'long' and the other is 'short.'

Does this principle only apply to such descriptions as 'short' or 'long'? No, it doesn't. It covers everything, 'good' or 'bad,' 'beautiful' or 'ugly,' 'big' or 'small' and so forth. No such attributes or qualities exist in things or by themselves. They are all created by our thoughts. We make these labels up and superimpose them upon things. Things in themselves are empty of such concepts. Thus when we truly understand this there is no point in becoming attached to something which we believe is 'good' and 'beautiful,' because the designation of 'good' or 'beautiful' is merely our own mental creation. The thing, in itself, does not possess these qualities. Similarly, there is also no point in being hostile toward what we consider 'ugly' or 'evil,' because the characteristics of 'ugly' and 'evil' are also our own creations. They are not inherent in things themselves.

That was an analysis of the dependency of phenomena. There is another way of analyzing the identity of things by using a very simple example (Rinpoche holds up his hand.) Everyone can agree that this is my hand. I can see the hand, you can see the hand and none of us are in disagreement that this is my hand. This hand can be used for writing and other activities, so it is functional. It seems that the hand truly and genuinely exists. But if we start to analyze, searching for the identity of this thing called 'hand' to understand what it really is – if we try to pinpoint what actually makes it a 'hand,' we run into difficulty. Examined piece by piece, this object is not a 'hand.' This is a 'thumb,' not a 'hand.' This is an 'index finger;' we wouldn't call it a 'hand.' The other fingers are not called 'hand' either, because they are called something else – 'fingers.' What about the palm of the hand? We might say that is the 'hand,' but we cannot exactly say so because the external component is called 'skin' and the internal parts are 'tendons,' 'flesh,' and 'bones.' These things in themselves do not deserve to be called 'hand.' They are just different parts. In short, we cannot find anything that is really the 'hand.' By analyzing in this way, we discover that 'hand' is empty of an identity. What we label hand is only a mental creation. We establish the belief that there is something called 'hand,' based on the presence of all the different parts, and we use the name 'hand' to substantiate this belief. But, actually, 'hand,' in itself, is empty of any identity and cannot be located anywhere.

Does this investigation to discover the emptiness of identity apply only to the right hand? No, it is also applicable to the left hand, the right foot, the left foot, the legs, the arms, to everything. All these terms are only

labels invented by our thoughts which are imputed upon a grouping of many parts, while in actuality there is no substantial thing to which this label applies. This is the reason why the Buddha taught about the five aggregates, in Sanskrit known as *skandhas*. 'Skandha' means a 'heap of many parts.' For some reason, our thinking process presumes that the parts as a group equal a single entity. We give a name to that entity as though it were one thing in itself. However, if we really look closely, it is not a single entity at all, but many parts. All things are like that. All things are many parts which we believe to be a single entity. When we analyze in this way, using intelligent reasoning, we discover that all so-called 'things' are just labels for groups of many parts which are empty of an independent entity. In other words, we cannot find anything that truly exists as such. This clear understanding of emptiness is discovered through the approach of intelligent reasoning.

This is called 'taking deduction as the path.' It is definitely possible through inference and deduction, through analysis of all phenomena, to establish that the nature of all things is emptiness. Through this we can gain a clear and well-grounded conviction about emptiness. But in the context of meditation practice or the actual training in samadhi, intellectual reasoning is not useful at all; it is not seen as a special or swift method. From this angle the Sutra path is even seen as a very long path. It takes many many aeons of accumulating merit, analyzing and meditating upon emptiness to arrive at the first bhumi. Only after an incredible number of additional aeons can we reach true and complete enlightenment.

In the Vajrayana context of personally training in samadhi, we need to possess certainty about the nature of mind. It is not important whether outer objects are empty or not empty. Even though all things are of course empty when resting in samadhi, it does not really make much difference. Instead of being caught up in analyzing such things, it is the mind of the perceiver, the consciousness itself, which is more important. That which feels happy or sad, angry or attached, that which experiences pleasure or pain is our mind. These feelings, whether virtuous or unwholesome, do not occur some other place. This mind is not something we have to ask other people to show us, because it is right here with us. As long as we have not received any instruction about how this mind is, it seems to be a concrete, real thing which we call 'me.' We believe it is made of some material substance and possesses some inherent reality. But to discover exactly how the mind is, we do not need to intellectually deduct or try to imagine how it *probably* is. We can simply look into our present mind itself. Where is our mind? Simply look inward. Does it have a shape or color? What does it look like? If it has a color, what color is it? If it has a shape, what shape is it? If your mind has neither color nor shape, then what exactly is its identity? To look in this way, we do not need to have another person present to ask, nor do we need to intellectualize through philosophical reasoning. We simply look into our mind to see what it is and how it looks like.

When we look in this way, we are unable to find a 'thing' which is in any particular location, has such and such identity, color or shape. Why is that? It is not because we do not understand or have failed to use reasoning. Looking towards this thing we call 'mind' and failing to find something with color or shape is since, by nature, this mind is emptiness. It does not possess any color or shape. It is not a 'thing' you can see or find; it is empty of identity.

This approach, called taking direct perception as the path, differs from the methods of reasoning or deduction. In order to arrive at the idea that things are empty, we use the path of deduction. However, what we have just described above is called the path of direct perception, which does not depend upon speculating about emptiness. It involves seeing emptiness directly – looking into our mind and personally experiencing it as it is, empty of a self-nature. Some people may become fearful when approaching the empty nature of mind, but there is no reason to be afraid. If the mind were really a substantial thing, there would be something to be frightened by. But since it does not possess any concrete entity whatsoever, seeing this should not invoke any fear or terror. On the contrary, a blissful, tranquil feeling arises which is sometimes described as the unity of bliss and emptiness, or as the unity of cognizance and emptiness.

To gain the conviction that all things are empty, we must use the Sutra system or the path of deduction to analyze and discern how things are. Yet when it comes to personally experiencing the state of emptiness, we need to use the path of direct perception through which we can directly and truly see how the nature of mind is empty and devoid of an entity. In short, the Sutra system is the path of deduction, while the Vajrayana system is the path of direct perception. That is their primary difference.

CHAPTER 9

Once again the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror said to Youthful Moonlight: "Youthful one, this being so, the bodhisattva mahasattva who wishes to quickly awaken truly and fully to

unexcelled true and complete enlightenment, and who wants to deliver all sentient beings across the ocean of existence, should listen to this King of Samadhi that fully reveals the equal nature of all things, is praised by all buddhas, and is the mother of all tathagatas. He should memorize it, retain, comprehend, read, recite, give readings of, chant daily, practice through non-emotional training, do so repeatedly, and, as well, teach it widely to others. Why is this? It is because this King of Samadhi that fully reveals the equal nature of all things gives birth to all tathagatas, arhats, samyak-sambuddhas, and from it arises all tathagatas, shravakas and pratyekabuddhas."

The Ninth Chapter of the *King of Samadhi Sutra* is called "Patient Acceptance of the Profound Dharma." It also covers the topic of emptiness. Emptiness, the absence of a concrete identity of all phenomena, is explained in greater detail, beyond the conventional definition of emptiness as a blank, nihilistic state. Everything, all phenomena and experience, unfolds and takes place like a dream, a magical illusion, an echo, a rainbow and so forth. In other words, although all things are empty of nature, relatively speaking all phenomena do unfold through dependent origination. When we dream of elephants and horses, do the horses and elephants really exist? No, they do not. Still, in the dream we experience elephants and horses as though they are actually present. In the same way, an echo lacks any independent voice, yet, it sounds as though a voice is responding.

Another example is of a drunk person who experiences the 'spins.' He feels as though the whole world is spinning around him. But is the world really spinning at that time? No, it's not, but it still feels that way to him. Although all things are empty and devoid of true existence, experiences occur based on dependent origination.

This chapter describes 'acceptance of the profound Dharma,' understanding the fact that although all things are ultimately empty of self-nature, relatively all things do possess some existence. We should not think that virtuous actions do not bring results or that disturbing emotions and evil deeds will not reap an effect. Relatively, negative actions do produce relative suffering. Relatively, positive actions do yield pleasant results. Relatively speaking, it is necessary to abandon disturbing emotions and purify obscurations. Relatively speaking, it is necessary to gather the accumulations of merit and so forth. Just because all things are empty and devoid of any self-entity does not mean that there is no point in worrying

about good and evil. Ultimately, all things are empty of any identity, but relatively there is 'good' and 'evil.' There is no conflict or contradiction between these two levels.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

STUDENT: Rinpoche, could you clarify the statement that appearances occur due to dependent origination?

RINPOCHE: 'Dependent origination' means that one thing occurs dependent upon another, not possessing any concrete existence of its own. Just as we explained before, the appearance of something 'long' depends upon the idea 'short.' The appearance of something 'short' depends on the idea 'long.' It is the same way with other aspects – 'good' is dependent upon 'bad,' while 'bad' is dependent upon 'good.' Everything is like that. The identity of things is empty and does not possess any of these attributes. Still, due to dependency, isn't it true that things in our experience *seem* to have such attributes? This is what is meant by the statement 'appearances arising in dependency.'

STUDENT: How are we meant to understand that the Buddha literally had past lives? Weren't these examples of so-called 'past lives' just symbolic demonstrations he gave to help us understand his teachings?

RINPOCHE: The Buddha did indeed have past lives. (Laughter). So, what are you going to say to that? (Laughter).

STUDENT: A few days ago, Rinpoche discussed the principle of sugatagarbha. He used the metaphor of gold that is buried under the house, unbeknownst to the beggar, although it has always been there. It is unchanging, even though covered over. If we take this literally and say that the tathagatagarbha is unchanging, doesn't that posit that it is something that ultimately exists? Isn't it better to say that it doesn't change, but it also doesn't remain the same? That it is free of changing and not changing? Otherwise, it seems like an actual entity that exists.

RINPOCHE: It is true that the identity, or essence, of the sugata-garbha is unchanging. But why is that stated? Because this identity or essence is, by nature, emptiness that is not composed of any material substance whatsoever. Because it does not possess any substantial existence, it is said that the essence of sugata-garbha is unchanging. Anything possessing concrete, material existence cannot possibly be changeless. That's impossible.

It is this absence of a concrete identity that the Buddha described in the Prajnaparamita scriptures in terms of the sixteen types of emptiness.

Buddha nature has no concrete identity. But does this mean that buddha nature is like space? No, it doesn't. As I mentioned earlier, space and buddha nature, or the nature of mind, are not the same. Space is 'dead emptiness' or 'physical emptiness.' A body with a mind is called a 'living person' while the same body without a mind is called a 'corpse' or 'dead body.' Similarly, the nature of mind is not 'dead emptiness,' as in the case of space, which is totally devoid of any cognizant quality. Buddha nature is empty of any identity but not dead like a corpse; it is able to know or experience whatever takes place. You can discover that for yourself, it is not very complicated. Try to look into your own mind, into that which perceives. Do you find any concrete thing at all? No, you don't. But, at the same time, does this mean that your body, in that instant, immediately became a corpse? No, it did not. Why? Because there is still the cognizant quality, the capacity to know or perceive. That is what is sometimes called 'luminosity' or 'wisdom.' This is the difference between space and buddha nature. Buddha nature is both empty and cognizant, and because of this empty cognizance, buddha nature is said to be unchanging.

RINPOCHE: Now, I have a question for the person who asked if the Buddha's past lives were actual or just symbolic. My question is, "Why did you ask this question? Is it because you consider that the Buddha abides in a state of primordial enlightenment? Or, is it because you don't believe in past lives for a Buddha?"

STUDENT: I have trouble understanding reincarnation.

RINPOCHE: Not only did Buddha Shakyamuni have past lives, but all beings had a life before the present one. They will experience a subsequent life as well. We have not had only one or two lives; we have experienced countless lifetimes within samsara, which is said to be without beginning. The Buddha said that unless we attain liberation and enlightenment we will continue to take one rebirth after another. As Buddhists, we accept this.

We now have a body, speech and mind. Setting aside the voice aspect because it does not possess much continuity of its own, let's discuss the body and mind aspects. When scientists explain the origin of things, for example, a pebble, they will talk for a long time. Where did the pebble come from? It is a piece of mountain that broke off, rolled down the hill, was polished and can now be called a 'pebble.' But where does its actual substance come from? They can discuss the origin of rock and how it is formed; there is an immense amount of information. It is the same when examining the human body. It does not appear spontaneously. A human

body arises from causes, such as the parent's genes and so forth. There is much to say when trying to trace back the origin of things.

When discussing mind, the moment of consciousness, where does the capacity to be aware and perceive come from? It comes from the previous moment of consciousness. Every instant creates the circumstance for a new moment of consciousness to exist. None of the material components of the body have the power to create this capacity of consciousness. So we can easily understand that the consciousness did not suddenly appear at some point while we were undergoing the different phases of embryonic life in our mother's womb. Consciousness only occurs from something that can cause it, which is the previous moment of consciousness. It is very clear that consciousness must have existed before conception took place in the womb. Therefore, there must have been lives prior to this.

Look at the fact that we are able to perceive and be conscious today. Does this mean that perhaps tomorrow mind will no longer exist, that you will be without mind? No, it doesn't happen that way. There is a continuation of consciousness regardless of whether or not the link between body and mind is interrupted. Based on that logic, we can feel sure that there will be future lives. There is nothing that interrupts this continuity of consciousness. There will be further experiences to undergo in the future. This is what the Buddha taught, and it is accepted by all the different schools of Buddhism.

Applying the Essential

Once again the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror said to Youthful Moonlight: "Youthful one, this being so, you should train yourself in what is called 'earnestly applying the essential.' Why is this? Youthful one, it is because a bodhisattva mahasattva who earnestly applies himself to the essential has no difficulty attaining unexcelled true and complete enlightenment, let alone this samadhi."

Then Youthful Moonlight rose from his seat, bared his shoulder, knelt on his right knee, joined his palms respectfully towards the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror, and said: "Transcendent Perfect Conqueror, the advice and instructions the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror has given and fully taught to all the bodhisattva mahasattvas are thoroughly communicated, fully revealed, and show all the trainings of a bodhisattva; this excellent explanation and clarification is wonderful! Transcendent Perfect Conqueror, since this is the domain of the tathagata and not that of the shravakas or pratyekabuddhas, needless to say it is not the domain of heretics."

"Transcendent Perfect Conqueror, I shall apply myself earnestly to the essential, and thus without regard for my life, I shall follow in the footsteps of the tathagata! What is the purpose of this? Transcendent Perfect Conqueror, I shall train in the footsteps of the tathagatas! Transcendent Perfect Conqueror, I shall awaken truly and fully to unexcelled true and complete enlightenment! Transcendent Perfect Conqueror, I shall utterly vanquish the evil maras! Transcendent Perfect Conqueror, I shall free all sentient

beings from their fears and miseries! May the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror please place his hand on my head!"

Perhaps it is for our own personal sake that with great faith and devotion we want to practice and accomplish the teachings. Such an approach is positive, but narrow or limited in that it does not embrace the vast attitude of a bodhisattva. We should ideally be motivated to benefit all sentient beings. Imagining them in number as infinite as the sky is vast, we should think that all these beings wish to be happy and free from pain and suffering. Although they want happiness they are not aware of how to create the causes for happiness and how to avoid the causes that result in suffering and misery. We, on the other hand, have received the Buddha's Dharma teachings and are following in his footsteps. Therefore, we have the advantage of knowing what to adopt and what to avoid. Through training, not only do we abolish the causes for suffering and create the conditions for future happiness; we also will be able to accomplish the welfare of other beings. We should try to cultivate the resolve set upon the attainment of supreme and perfect enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. Please study the Dharma and practice with that kind of attitude and motivation.

Chapter 10

We have now reached Chapter Ten in the *King of Samadhi Sutra*, which is called "Departing for the City." Here, the bodhisattva Youthful Moonlight, feeling strong faith and devotion towards the Buddha, makes the following request: "Blessed One, please place your right hand on the crown of my head." Due to this request, the Buddha extends his right hand and places it upon the head of Youthful Moonlight. In that very moment, something unprecedented occurs to the bodhisattva, Youthful Moonlight. Innumerable entrance doors to the states of samadhi dawn within his stream of being. Great recall and other qualities of enlightenment effortlessly occurred.

This is unusual because the sutras do not often describe requesting and receiving blessings. Yet, right here in this chapter, we see very clearly that based upon the blessings received from the hand of the Buddha, the bodhisattva Youthful Moonlight attained a special stage of realization. Repeatedly making supplications and prayers is extremely important for us as practitioners of the path of Mahamudra. Our daily chant demonstrates the request for blessings:

Devotion is the head of meditation, as is taught,
The guru opens the gate to the treasury of oral instructions.
To this meditator, who continually supplicates him,
Grant your blessings so that genuine devotion is born in me.

In the Vajrayana teachings we find many techniques and methods for generating faith in the Three Jewels and devotion to our root master through which we can receive empowerments and blessings. The essential reason for this is to enable us to discover the state of samadhi if we have not yet glimpsed or realized it. For those who have already recognized the state of samadhi but who have not yet stabilized or clarified it, training in devotion to receive blessings facilitates such stability and clarity. Similarly, the practitioner who has achieved stability and clarity is ensured continued progress on the path, through which the state of samadhi unfolds and expands to a much higher extent. In this way, receiving blessings is of utmost importance in the Vajrayana system. Although the *King of Samadhi* is a sutra, we still find that it mentions receiving blessings.

Having received blessings from the Buddha, the bodhisattva Youthful Moonlight, extended an invitation to the Buddha and his entire retinue of shravaka monks and bodhisattvas to grace his home, where they could be served different refreshments. This chapter describes in detail, how Youthful Moonlight created beautiful decorations, cleaned the path and adorned all the scenery at Rajgir and Vulture Peak Mountain. He made extremely lavish and splendid arrangements.

It's said that the landscape of Rajgir and Vulture Peak Mountain was perfect at that time, yet, when we visit that area today it may seem to us a totally different place than what is described in this sutra. Our time is a different era than that of the Buddha. The Buddha took birth on the Indian border after having made five perfect considerations, which included the most perfect place and the most perfect parents. The Buddha discovered that, in those days, the country around the present India-Nepal border, sometimes called the 'Noble Land' and possessing the finest and richest cultural enjoyments, was the most suitable place for him to take birth. Since then, the merit and prosperity of that area has changed quite a bit, so we are not to be blamed when we regard it in a quite different way.

Further on, this chapter describes how with utmost respect and veneration for the Buddha, the bodhisattva Youthful Moonlight made all different kinds of offerings and requested teachings. This demonstrates the necessity of showing great respect and appreciation for the teacher and the teachings when requesting to be taught. This is an extremely crucial point.

The Buddha said, "When approaching the Dharma, we should sustain four notions. First, sustain the notion of yourself as a sick person." What does that mean? It means we are now in the situation called 'samsaric existence.' We have arrived here due to karma and disturbing emotions. At present, we are still planting new seeds of negative karma and disturbing emotions which will ensure that in the future we will again reap their painful result.

While immersed in samsaric existence, it is impossible to avoid or transcend the three types of suffering. Both now and in the future we will suffer. This is like a person suffering from a disease from which he or she feels ill at present, and which will also cause more complicated illnesses to ripen in the future. Do we have to accept being sick and remain in this state? No, we don't. A sick person will try to find the appropriate cure to eliminate both the present disease and the causes for future illness. In the same way, the person in samsaric existence who wishes to be free from suffering must find the cure for the illness of karma and disturbing emotions. That cure is the perfect and sublime Dharma. Thus, the Buddha said, "Think of yourself as a sick person. Keep the notion of the Dharma as the true medicine" – the Dharma here being the three superior trainings of discipline, concentration and discriminating knowledge.

This covers the first and second of the 'four notions' we should sustain when approaching the Dharma. The third and fourth of the 'four notions' relate to the 'doctor' and the 'cure.' The Buddha said, "You should give rise to the notion of the spiritual teacher as a competent and skilled physician." What does this mean? We may acknowledge that we are sick and need to take medicine. But by ourselves we don't know what medicine to take. When we are sick, it is not enough to eat just any medicine: we need the exact medicine prescribed for our particular disease. To be cured we must consult a competent physician; an unskilled healer will not suffice. Similarly, as long as we remain within samsaric existence, we experience both suffering and the creation of causes for new suffering. To remedy that we must rely on the medicine of the sacred Dharma. The spiritual friend or teacher is like a capable doctor who knows exactly what type of medicine is best suited for our individual disease.

Fourth, the Buddha said, "Practice as diligently as you would follow a course of medical treatment." When we have the great fortune to receive teachings and correctly practice them, what should we think? Just as we diligently follow a medicinal cure to regain our good health, we should apply the remedies against karma and disturbing emotions to become more free. Each time we use a method that is a direct antidote or remedy

against our karma and disturbing emotions, we should develop the notion that we are becoming more and more cured, increasingly freed from the negative karmas and disturbing emotions in our stream of being. This is very important.

These 'four notions' taught by the Buddha are phrased in a positive way, but the master-disciple relationship can also be approached negatively. Such a misconstruction is known as the 'four perverted attitudes' a person can have when approaching the Dharma. These were described by the omniscient great master, Longchen Rabjam. He said, "There are four notions to avoid. Avoid thinking of the teacher as a musk deer, oneself as a hunter, the teachings as musk, and the act of requesting teachings as extracting the musk from the musk deer." Some people think of the Dharma as something valuable, like musk, that they need to get their hands on. They bear no real affection or appreciation for the spiritual master. For this type of people the teacher is like a musk deer, whose value lies in what they can extract from him. For such individuals, receiving teachings and trying to understand the Dharma is nothing other than going hunting, attempting to trap the musk deer, take the musk and make off with it. "This is a perverted attitude and wrong motivation. Please give that up," Longchen Rabjam advised.

Rather, we should be like the great bodhisattva described in this chapter who shows immense respect and veneration. He decorated and adorned the entire length of the path the Buddha journeyed from Vulture Peak Mountain through the streets of the city of Rajgir to the bodhisattva's house, which itself had been thoroughly cleaned, swept and purified. In his home, he hung up all different kinds of decorations, such as banners, canopies, parasols and so forth. He tossed about flower blossoms, burned fragrant incense of agar wood and other kinds of fragrance, and had musical instruments played. In short, he welcomed the Buddha with the most exquisite decorations and offerings as sincere acts of respect.

We can use this example of the bodhisattva Youthful Moonlight, to learn how to request teachings. This tenth chapter of the *King of Samadhi Sutra*, 'Departing for the City,' describes his efforts.

After having invited the Buddha and his retinue into his house, making offerings and requesting them to sit, Youthful Moonlight then offered praises extolling the Buddha's amazing physical features, spiritual qualities and so forth. He did this orally, and mentally as well. In his own mind he made a request: "How is it possible for the Buddha to manifest such wonderful and amazing qualities of Body, Speech and Mind, and to perform such wonderful enlightened deeds to influence and guide all sentient

beings? How can we bodhisattvas, who aspire toward buddhahood, develop these same qualities?" The Buddha, reading his thoughts, replied, "A bodhisattva mahasattva who possesses one single quality will quickly, truly, and completely awaken to the unsurpassable state of perfect enlightenment."

The Buddha continued, "What is this single quality? It is understanding the identity of all things." What does that mean? It refers to seeing the real condition of things exactly as it is, the empty nature of all phenomena. What does it mean to understand the identity of all things? This is also described here as 'understanding that all knowable things are devoid of names' – that all things are empty of any substantial, independent identity. They are beyond terminology and are not within the confines of names and words; they are beyond 'letters.' What does this really mean? It is not just that the nature of things is beyond names or words: they are also beyond the concrete identity to which that word refers. Take, for example, the word 'mountain.' The mountain itself is beyond the identity of the label 'mountain.' Body is beyond the word 'body.' 'House' itself is beyond the label 'house.'

The natural state of emptiness is described as 'dharmata' in the general Sutra teachings, and as 'nature of mind' in the instructions of Vajrayana. Here, the Buddha says "all things are devoid of names, beyond word, divested from their sounds." This means that we cannot really formulate by means of words how the real condition, the nature of things, truly is. This is what is described in the Sutra teachings: "Transcendent knowledge is inexpressible, inconceivable and indescribable. It does not arise, does not cease and is like the essence of space."

In the sutras, the word emptiness or the term 'the nature of things' – 'dharmata' – is generally used. In Vajrayana, the phrase 'nature of mind' is more often used. But these two actually amount to the same thing. You cannot adequately describe the nature of things with words. If you say "It is such and such" you make it sound like a concrete, real thing.

What this amounts to is that the actual nature of things is not something that can be formulated by means of words or concepts. Any word merely describes a deluded way of perceiving something and establishing its existence. This is a limited, confined standpoint. An alternative way of formulation is to define an object by its opposite, expressing what it is not, which merely turns into a nihilistic, empty state. Both 'is' and 'is not' fall short of expressing how the real condition of things really is. By means of thinking, which is only an ignorant expression of concepts attempting to establish themselves, we try to assert that it 'is' like this or it 'is not' like

that, or that 'it is both' or 'it is neither.' Any attempt to formulate the nature of things through deluded words only results in further mistaken experience, and does not approach the true condition, which is beyond words, names and letters.

It is the same with thoughts: since dualistic mind is always activated through ignorance, when it formulates the idea "It is!," the result is a notion of substantial existence, whereas the thought "It is not!" results in nihilistic voidness. Both instances fall short of approaching the way it truly is. In short, the nature of things lies beyond the reach of verbal or mental formulations.

According to the Sutra system, the nature of things is realized by gathering an enormous accumulation of merit over a tremendously long period of time – sometimes throughout three incalculable aeons. The Vajrayana system holds that through sincere devotion, one-pointed supplication, and receiving empowerments and blessings, the realization present in the mind of our root and lineage masters is somehow transmitted or transferred into our stream of being. This enables us to realize the nature of mind that lies beyond words, names, letters, and sounds.

CHAPTER 11

The eleventh chapter is called "Retaining the Sutra." To retain a sutra in this case does not mean just memorizing or remembering the words of the sutra, but it refers more to the meaning that these words point to, which is the true nature of things. To bring the actual experience of this nature of things into our stream of being is what is meant by retaining the sutra.

CHAPTER 12

The twelfth chapter is called "Fully Training in Samadhi." The Buddha begins with the statement that understanding the nature of things – training in this type of samadhi – brings tremendous qualities and virtues, but these only result when we practice or apply the state of samadhi. Qualities are not engendered by just talking about emptiness. Merely paying lip service to emptiness does not bring about great virtue at all. Just claiming that everything is empty by nature, and that engaging in virtue does not add to emptiness, or that committing negative actions does not detract from emptiness – that actions have no effect whatsoever – such claims

will not bring forth any spiritual qualities. We must personally experience the state of emptiness through training in samadhi. This training lies beyond the pitfalls of disturbing emotions and of the three realms: the Realms of Desire, the Realms of Form, and the Formless Realms. That is why this chapter is titled "Fully Training in Samadhi."

CHAPTER 13

Then the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror said to Youthful Moonlight, "Youthful one, this being so, a bodhisattva mahasattva who wishes to awaken truly and fully to unexcelled true and complete enlightenment should be skilled in defining samadhi. Youthful one, what is meant by defining samadhi? It means the suchness of all things, equality, absence of inequality, nonthought, nonconception, unconstructedness; freedom from impetus, from arising, and from ceasing; the utter absence of thought, conception and conceptualizing; freedom from mental focus and from mental fabrication; the utter absence of discrimination; the utter absence of desire, of anger, and of stupidity; ..."

The thirteenth chapter is called "Defining Samadhi." Both the twelfth and thirteenth chapters concentrate on the topic of samadhi. The twelfth chapter describes how to train in samadhi, not just by paying lip service to emptiness, but by personally applying oneself to experiencing samadhi. The thirteenth chapter fully describes how the state of samadhi actually is. The Buddha says that it is a training in the equality of all things, without formulating a conceptual attitude about what emptiness is, but simply facing the true nature of things exactly as it is. Without having to patch up the natural state with our conceptualized version of what emptiness is, we should simply abide in what is already empty. We do not need to fabricate a version of what luminosity or the cognizant quality is, either. In other words, we should not form a conceptual attitude but should rest naturally, facing the nature of things – the real condition – as it is.

Here the Buddha also mentions that we should know the real identity of each of the five aggregates, not in a deluded, ordinary way, but their real condition. When understanding the eighteen elements or constituents, we should not just be able to list their attributes but should gain an understanding of their nature, exactly as it is. The same holds true for the twelve sense factors.

At this point the Buddha mentions the supports for samadhi: to be mindful, discerning, thoughtful, conscientious, and so forth. Among these helpers, the most important when training in samadhi is mindfulness. The *Treasury of Abhidharma* describes mindfulness as "never forgetting what should be abandoned and what should be adopted." It is always taught that we should keep clearly in mind that if something is negative it should be avoided and if something is virtuous it should be adopted, especially while training in samadhi.

There is an example of the effect of mindfulness. The great bodhisattva Shantideva said, "When we train in meditation, there are thieves who want to come and steal. There are robbers who try to rob our wealth. These robbers, thieves and bandits are our disturbing emotions and conceptual thinking – feeling dull, agitated and so forth."

For example, consider a person who possesses both wealth and property. Robbers and thieves who would like to plunder his wealth will first estimate what kind of person he is. If he is strong, capable, wise and balanced and also has presence of mind and stability, the bandits will think, "We don't have much of a chance to steal anything from that guy. We'd better stay away from him. If we try to get close enough to rob him, we will get caught. We might as well forget about it." On the other hand, if the rich person is feeble, mindless, sloppy, lazy, not very strong and inattentive, the thieves will think, "We have a chance here. We can easily rob this guy." They will draw closer and wait for their opportunity. As soon as the opportunity arises, they will by stealth or force carry off whatever they can and make off with all his possessions.

In the same way, when a practitioner tries to train in meditation, metaphorical thieves and bandits lie in ambush waiting for an opportunity. If we are careful, conscientious, and have presence of mind, then these disturbing emotions find no opportunity to gain a foothold. On the other hand, if we are lazy, inattentive, careless, and fond of wasting time, then certainly the disturbing emotions will be right there ready to arise and take over. The wealth and virtue of our meditation practice will be plundered so that we are left totally destitute, without any spiritual qualities whatsoever, overcome again and again by disturbing emotions.

Therefore, mindfulness is extremely important, in the preliminary practices of meditation, in the main part of meditation training itself, and in the concluding activities. Presence of mind or mindfulness is always of utmost importance, for from it good qualities will arise spontaneously. The bodhisattva Shantideva said, "Whoever keeps mindfulness on guard

will naturally also possess the qualities of being conscientious, wise and discerning. Therefore, always strive to be mindful."

CHAPTER 14

The fourteenth chapter has the title "Showing the Smile." After this teaching the bodhisattva, Youthful Moonlight, gave rise to extraordinary devotion and faith. He told the Buddha, "It is a great wonder that you have bestowed this teaching on samadhi. In the future, I will correctly practice and accomplish this teaching you have taught." He made many similar vows. Then the Buddha smiled and made predictions, saying, "This is what you should do. In the future, you will be able to practice and accomplish these teachings." The Buddha never smiled without reason, so the bodhisattva Maitreya, asked the Buddha, "Why are you smiling? Please explain the reason for that."

CHAPTER 15

The fifteenth chapter is called "Explaining the Reason for the Smile." In response to Maitreya's question, the Buddha explained that the bodhisattva Youthful Moonlight had already in many past lives served and followed innumerable other buddhas and bodhisattvas, gathering a vast amount of merit and receiving many teachings on samadhi, and, with immense perseverance had already practiced the state of samadhi. Through this, he had now become the disciple of Lord Buddha, himself.

The Buddha predicted, "In the future, especially during the Dark Age of the five degenerations, he will become a great upholder of pure conduct as a perfect monk and will, in that very life take to heart and fully realize the nature of samadhi. Having realized the nature of samadhi, he will spread and propagate the teachings found in this sutra to an almost countless number of followers, who will all be benefited by entering the path of enlightenment. Moreover, the transmission of this teaching will be uninterrupted far into the future." This is exactly what happened. The bodhisattva, Youthful Moonlight later took rebirth as the Lord of Dharma, Gampopa, who was an exceedingly pure monk and an upholder of perfect discipline. In that very lifetime he realized in completeness and without any error whatsoever the true state of Mahamudra, which he then taught to a huge number of followers. His teachings are still carried on in an unbroken transmission, extending the duration of the Buddhadharma and

benefiting innumerable beings. This all substantiates the prophecy of the Buddha.

UTTERLY FEARLESS

Once again the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror said to Youthful Moonlight: "Youthful one, this being so, a bodhisattva mahasattva who wishes to liberate all sentient beings from samsaric existence, and who wishes to fully establish all beings in unexcelled and sublime joy and the bliss of samadhi, should listen to, memorize, comprehend, retain, read, recite, give readings of, daily chant, practice through non-emotional training, do so repeatedly, and, as well, teach widely to others, this King of Samadhi that fully reveals the equal nature of all things."

"Why is this? Youthful one, this King of Samadhi that fully reveals the equal nature of all things, causes transcendence from evil states of existence, and liberation from all sickness. Thus, youthful one, when a bodhisattva mahasattva hears, retains, and then trains in this King of Samadhi that fully reveals the equal nature of all things, youthful one, that bodhisattva mahasattva will deliver all sentient beings from the ocean of samsaric existence and fully establish them in unexcelled and sublime joy and the bliss of samadhi. Thus he will quickly attain this samadhi and also awaken truly and fully to unexcelled true and complete enlightenment."

CHAPTER 16

Yesterday, in the fifteenth chapter of the *King of Samadhi Sutra*, the Buddha gave Youthful Moonlight this prophecy: "In the future, in this world you will become a pure monk with many followers. You will be a great upholder and propagator of this samadhi."

Following that comes the sixteenth chapter, called the "Chapter on Past Events." In this chapter, the Buddha explains to the bodhisattva Youthful Moonlight the importance of listening, memorizing, reading, and reciting for others the *King of Samadhi Sutra*. To support this, the Buddha narrates a story from one of his former lives.

In this particular past life, the Buddha was a prince named Mati, or "Wise One," who fell seriously ill. It seemed that there was neither a cure for his illness, nor a doctor who could help him recover. Finally, he met a Dharma teacher named Blessed by Purity, who told him to receive teachings on the *King of Samadhi Sutra*. Upon hearing this sutra explained to him, the prince was filled with joy. He fully comprehended the meaning expounded in the sutra and by putting it into practice, gradually recovered from his illness.

In the practice of Mahamudra we can also find an instruction on how to utilize disease as the path. When faced with a painful illness, simply rest in the essence within the painful sensation, in the evenness of the state of Mahamudra. Through this the sickness can be cured. This story supports that instruction.

The monk teacher Blessed by Purity told Prince Mati, "In the future, a time will come when many people will be crude and incorrigible, with rigid attachment to a solid reality. Their behavior and attitude will be characterized by crude disturbing emotions, such as strong aggression and strong attachment. Their diligence in practicing and applying the teachings, as well as their devotion or interest in learning and understanding, will be very little. You should not associate with such people or let yourself be carried away by their attitude and behavior."

The teacher then advised the prince, "When that time comes, you should give up bad companions and focus on the practice of samadhi. If you are able to do this, the attainment of enlightenment will be achieved without any hardship."

CHAPTER 17

The seventeenth chapter is called "The Samadhi-Door of Numerous Buddhas." All the while the Buddha has remained seated in Youthful Moonlight's home. At this point, the great bodhisattva, Maitreya, mentally requests the Buddha to return to Vulture Peak Mountain. This request is telepathically received by the Buddha, but before he leaves, Maitreya goes ahead, and, through his extraordinary powers and miraculous abilities, purifies and adorns all of the scenery around Vulture Peak Mountain with

flowers, precious jewels, and a great platform seat, a throne supported by lions, for the Buddha to sit upon while teaching. Having magically manifested all these things Maitreya returns to the Buddha, mentally bowing and circumambulating, and again takes his seat before him.

After this, the Buddha departs from the city of Rajgir and proceeds towards Vulture Peak Mountain. He is accompanied by a gathering of Sangha members in the form of monks and bodhisattvas. When he sits on the lion's throne magically created by the bodhisattva Maitreya, the entire gathering is then presented with offerings of flower garlands, incense, music, Dharma robes, canopies, and all different kinds of sense pleasures. After the Buddha has taken seat among this great gathering of humans and nonhumans, the bodhisattva Youthful Moonlight, again presents the Buddha with questions. In the earlier chapters, Youthful Moonlight had asked, "How can we awaken to the unsurpassable state of true and complete enlightenment?" and the Buddha had replied, "One must cultivate and train in the King of Samadhi that fully reveals the equal nature of all things." Now the bodhisattva Youthful Moonlight inquires further, "If a bodhisattva mahasattva wishes to fully train in this King of Samadhi, which qualities must he or she possess?" The Buddha replied, "A bodhisattva who possesses four qualities will acquire this samadhi."

What are the four qualities that we should possess? First, we should possess an attitude of patience and forbearance which enables us to tolerate unpleasant circumstances. A bodhisattva should be pleasant to keep company with so that others feel comfortable with him or her. He or she should not be aggressive, jealous, proud or conceited, but should be gentle, kind and disciplined. With the quality of patience a bodhisattva should be able to bear even hurtful words, criticism, and aggressive and envious speech, without responding in an angry, competitive or conceited way. That is the first of the four qualities necessary for the attainment of the King of Samadhi.

The second of the four causes that gives rise to the pure state of samadhi is discipline. The Tibetan word for 'discipline' is *tsültrim*, which means 'keeping a gentle, correct mode of behavior.' This means that, regardless of whether we are a lay person or have taken ordination, we should behave in a pure, gentle, disciplined way which is not in disharmony with anyone. Seen from the outside, we may think it is uncomfortable to try to behave this way, but actually it is not.

The Sanskrit word for 'discipline' is *shila*, which means 'tranquillity' or 'serenity' and at the same time suggests the quality of coolness, of being shaded or refreshed. India is a hot country, especially during the summer

season, and the heat is looked upon as unpleasant and even agonizing. To find a place of shade or coolness where we can relax and feel refreshed and relieved is especially comforting. Using this example, the Buddha teaches that when our state of mind is agitated by the disturbing emotions of aggression, attachment and stupidity, it is as unpleasant and painful as being in a pit of fire. There is no peace here, no rest. On the other hand, to sustain a gentle, disciplined attitude and state of mind is like resting in a cool, shaded abode which is pleasant and free from pain. That is the meaning of 'discipline' in this context. To cultivate a sense of discipline and gentleness is the second of the four causes of samadhi.

The third cause for giving rise to the state of samadhi is renunciation, which in present-day usage has a connotation of disenchantment, dread, or distaste for samsaric existence. Here, this means that we do not harbor a state of mind that aims towards remaining in any of the three realms of samsaric existence: the realms of desire, of form, and of formlessness. As you know, the chant we repeat each morning says, "revulsion is the foot of meditation, it is taught." 'Revulsion' means with deep disgust to turn away from samsaric existence. This type of revulsion truly is the foot of meditation.

A person with legs can walk to his intended destination, while a person without legs is crippled and cannot walk. In the same way, if we remain attached to samsaric states, this attachment keeps us handicapped in samsara. Yet if we develop a feeling of renunciation and revulsion towards our attachment to samsara, we are no longer crippled. We are freed to proceed along the path to liberation and the omniscient state of complete enlightenment. Since detachment or renunciation is the opposite of attachment to samsara, it is the third of the four causes that give rise to samadhi.

The last of these four qualities is the attitude of yearning towards understanding the Dharma and striving to gain full comprehension of the teachings. Having searched for, discovered, and fully understood the Dharma teachings, we develop the strong wish to share this understanding with other beings. When expounding the Dharma and helping others to understand the teachings, we should do so with a motivation and attitude that are utterly pure. We should be totally free from negative attitudes such as yearning for material gain, fame or veneration. Our motive should arise out of the sincere wish to alleviate the suffering of others and bring them to perfect happiness. In this way we can truly benefit other beings and guide them out of their present situation.

Recognizing the means of liberation does not occur all by itself. We are unable to comprehend the path of enlightenment through our own abilities. Why is that? If we were utterly free from ignorance and disturbing emotions, and if our minds were unobscured, certainly nothing could prevent us from fully comprehending the true Dharma. But this is not the case; we are at present covered by the obscurations of ignorance and disturbing emotions. By nature we are fully capable of creating further samsara, but we are not naturally capable of seeing the path that leads out of it. For this reason, it is extremely important to seek the Dharma and try to comprehend the teachings. Once immense appreciation of the true Dharma has been born in our mind-stream through learning and understanding, and great merit and ability has arisen, we should teach other beings. The 'pure motivation to expound the Dharma' is the fourth of the four qualities.

We should understand as practitioners of the path of Mahamudra that these four qualities that give rise to the state of samadhi are extremely important and are something we should cultivate. We should not only attempt this, but achieve it. The first and second of the four qualities, patience and discipline, are qualities we as human beings can acquire. We can train in patience, observe the precepts and remain gentle and disciplined.

If we were reborn in an inferior type of body such as that of an animal, or if we were reborn in a place where there is no chance to ever hear Dharma teachings, then we would have an excuse for being prevented from training in patience and discipline. But this is not the case right now. We are human beings. In addition to being human, we have achieved something that is most difficult – finding a precious human body fully endowed with the eight freedoms and ten riches. Therefore, it is both possible and necessary for us to train in patience and observe discipline.

Among the general and extraordinary preliminaries of Mahamudra, we need to train in the notion of impermanence; that nothing really lasts or is reliable. There is great benefit in taking to heart the fact of impermanence. The notion of impermanence is what spurs us on to enter the door of the Dharma and to engage in Dharma practice. Secondly, cultivating an understanding of impermanence spurs us to be diligent. Even though we have become so-called Buddhists, sometimes we are diligent and other times we are not. However, if we remember that nothing lasts and that all things are impermanent, we will feel we must practice right now. In this way, the thought of impermanence helps us to be more diligent and give rise to greater exertion. Finally, the notion of impermanence helps us to quickly reach the state of fruition. Along with meditating or contemplating

impermanence, we should spend time reflecting upon the cause and effect of karmic misdeeds and the defects of samsara. In this way, among the general preliminaries of Mahamudra, the four mind-changings are extremely important.

In this chapter, the Buddha also describes the great purpose of training in the special state of samadhi that is likened to a great highway through which we can proceed freely and smoothly towards the state of complete and perfect enlightenment. Without training in samadhi, we are unable to awaken to enlightenment. The Buddha further explains how many past Buddhas, mentioned by name, taught the Sutra teachings on samadhi. One Buddha was named Lord of Intelligence, another was named Lord of Wisdom and so forth. Many names are listed in the text.

Chapter 18

Once again the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror said to Youthful Moonlight: "Youthful one, this being so, you should know that a bodhisattva mahasattva who retains this samadhi, who comprehends, upholds, reads, recites, gives readings of, chants it daily and, as well, teaches it widely to others, will possess four beneficial qualities. What are the four? His merit will be undefeatable; he will remain indomitable in the face of attacking opponents; his wisdom will be immeasurable; and his courageous eloquence will be boundless."

In the eighteenth chapter, "Fully Entrusting the Samadhi," the Buddha explains that when a bodhisattva mahasattva becomes proficient in chanting a reading transmission of this sutra and teaches it in a vast way, he or she will achieve four great qualities.

The first of these four qualities is that the merit accrued by means of this activity will remain undefeatable. Training in this samadhi gathers the accumulation of wisdom. In terms of the Sutra teachings, we realize the truth of dharmata, which is the equivalent of arriving at the first bhumi, called the Truly Joyous. Having accomplished this we are able to manifest the twelve times one hundred great qualities and the merit of that state is utterly undefeatable.

The second of these four qualities is to remain undaunted, literally 'indomitable when under attack.' Having achieved the special, true state of samadhi, is in itself the authentic cause for fully, completely, and perfectly

awakening to buddhahood. Consequently, the causes for full awakening possess qualities that resemble the awakened state itself. These qualities include the fourfold fearlessness. 'Fearlessness' here means not being intimidated or frightened by anything whatsoever. These four types of fearlessness are the twofold fearlessness, which is due to the accomplishment of personal aims by means of the perfect abandonment of what should be abandoned and the perfect realization of what should be realized. No attack or criticism launched by any god or demon, even Lord Brahma, can in any way intimidate the bodhisattva who has realized the state of samadhi. He or she has total confidence and assurance that this state of true and perfect samadhi, is in his or her experience, utterly flawless and without error. Even if Lord Brahma should point his finger and say, "You have not really realized this," the bodhisattva would remain utterly fearless and completely unintimidated.

The final fruition of the true state of samadhi signifies that all faults and defects have been totally eliminated, both the obscuration of disturbing emotions and the obscuration of conceptual knowledge. If a demon or Lord Brahma himself were to say, "You have not fully abandoned all defects," no doubt or hesitation whatsoever would remain. No criticism that the state of samadhi, which is the insight into the true nature of things, is in any way faulty or incomplete could affect it. This is utter fearlessness.

So, the first two of the fourfold fearlessness is to be fearless concerning the personal achievement of abandonment and realization. The third and fourth qualities of fearlessness are stated in terms of accomplishing the aims of others – fearlessness in declaring the true path and fearlessness in declaring the direct obstacles or hindrances on the path.

Now I will explain the third fearlessness in declaring the true path. The perfect Buddha teaches the correct path to enlightenment without any error or mistake, stating clearly, "This is the path traversed by all ordinary beings, bodhisattvas and accomplished masters. It is unmistaken." The awakened bodhisattva or buddha is utterly fearless in the face of an attack or objection, such as someone protesting, "You are unable to show what really leads to true and complete enlightenment. You can show part of the path, but you cannot really teach the entire path." Based on the assurance of having realized what the true state of samadhi really is, the awakened bodhisattva remains unintimidated because he can indeed fully teach the correct and entire path to enlightenment.

Fourth, the Buddha possesses fearlessness in declaring what the obstacles and hindrances to the path of liberation actually are. Were a demon or Lord Brahma to say, "These things will not really obstruct the path to

liberation. You need not abandon such and such," the awakened bodhisattva would be unintimidated because he or she can truly declare what is an obstacle to the path.

The third of the four qualities achieved by a bodhisattva when training in the state of samadhi is that wisdom becomes infinite, increasing in an immeasurable way. Training in the state of samadhi allows us to clearly perceive the nature of things, the nature of our mind. This is the natural state which we have failed to realize since beginningless samsara. By means of receiving the pointing-out instruction, or by other means, we see, for the time we remain in samadhi, the real condition of our mind. Ultimately, recognizing our mind-essence is itself a true cause for accomplishing the ultimate wisdom called 'the wisdom that knows the nature of things as they are.' Such wisdom grows boundlessly once it is possessed.

This wisdom truly perceives the state of enlightenment, the true nature of all things as dharmata. All conditioned phenomena occur within dharmadhatu, the sphere or expanse of the nature of things. No normal conditioned phenomena can, in fact, take place or be experienced outside this realm of the nature of things. Therefore, the second of the two supreme types of wisdom – the 'wisdom that perceives all that exists' of relative phenomena – is automatically realized as well.

In this way, by training in the samadhi which perceives the nature of things or the nature of mind, we become boundless in the two primary types of wisdom: the wisdom that sees the nature of things and the wisdom that perceives all that exists. In addition, the five general wisdoms, such as the wisdom of dharmadhatu, the wisdom of equality, the all-accomplishing wisdom and so forth, automatically unfold during this training. For example, the all-accomplishing wisdom ensures that any activity that arises out of the state of enlightenment is both unmistaken and unhindered.

The fourth of the four qualities is that our courageous eloquence becomes boundless. The courage that arises after truly and genuinely realizing the special state of samadhi ensures that we are totally unafraid of taking a wrong path. Self-assurance is gained, and through it we know that by training further in the perfect state of samadhi, we will progress on the true path of awakening and unmistakably arrive at perfect buddhahood endowed with the inconceivable qualities. We have no fear of taking a wrong track or going in the wrong direction. We also have no fear of guiding others in the wrong direction, thinking, "If I teach others, maybe they will be led on a wrong path. I'm not really sure." Instead, we feel great courage, immeasurable and boundless fortitude, and the conviction that,

"I can show the way for others! I as well can progress on this excellent path! I can overcome the disturbing emotions that are to be abandoned! And I can accomplish the ultimate state of complete and perfect buddhahood!" Such boundless courage is the fourth of the four qualities.

This completes the eighteenth chapter. "Declaring the Benefits of Training in Samadhi."

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

STUDENT: Yesterday, Rinpoche spoke a great deal about devotion. My students think it is very strange to develop insight continually during the path and then give it away in devotion. If I tell them that devotion means uniting one's mind with the teacher's that sounds like hocus-pocus to them. Would you talk about devotion in the Sutra tradition?

RINPOCHE: Generally speaking, there are three types of faith or devotion. First, there is admiration. Secondly, there is yearning. Thirdly, there is trust or confidence. Devotion is very important, but to have faith or devotion in something, we must have some sense of its value and qualities. Otherwise, we will not feel any admiration or yearning. Therefore, it is very important to first gain some understanding of the Dharma to trust in the teachings. It is the same when we are sick and are given medicine. If we do not really believe the medicine will cure us, what will happen? We may or may not feel like taking the medicine. When we give rise to doubt and think, "This may help, but, on the other hand, maybe it will make me feel worse – maybe it will be like being poisoned," then we will abandon the cure. But if we do not eat the medicine, we will not get better.

Similarly, if we have some degree of trust because of knowing the qualities, we will apply the teachings to ourselves in a way that is free from doubt or hesitation. Otherwise, when it comes to our practice, if we just are influenced by blind faith, we may waver, thinking, "This may help. but, on the other hand, maybe it is pointless." Such half-hearted feelings of uncertainty are the very antithesis of faith. Without trust we will not practice the teaching, and without practice we will not achieve any result. We may think, "What my teacher says is really true, but on the other hand, maybe it is just meaningless words." In that way, we are unable to totally commit ourselves to practicing the teachings we have received. Blind faith does not understand the reason for something. Faith and devotion in the Buddhist sense means understanding the true value and therefore, feeling trust or confidence.

STUDENT: Yesterday, in Chapter 13 you mentioned the title of the text without really delving into it. Did you plan to explain the title?

RINPOCHE: I did mention that according to this chapter called "Definitively Describing Samadhi" we need two virtues when practicing samadhi: mindfulness and intelligence. First of all, we need to train in samadhi, and while training in samadhi, the most important key point is mindfulness. We spent a lot of time talking about the importance of mindfulness. With mindfulness we can train nicely but without it, we will not remember how to practice. Also, when we are careless and unmindful, there are thieves and robbers waiting to sneak in.

'Definitively Describing' means to declare what is absolutely necessary when training in samadhi. The most important thing is the presence of mindfulness. Unless we are mindful when practicing, everything slips away. The body sits on the meditation cushion, but the mind does not. We just sit and think about this and that. So if we want to have a good state of samadhi, we should be mindful and conscientious; then we can really apply ourselves to the training.

STUDENT: I'm interested in applying the state of samadhi to the post-meditation state. I try to be mindful as much as I can, but I am easily distracted by my own speech and the speech of others and all the sensory input happening around me. I wondered if Rinpoche could give any further guidance?

RINPOCHE: Certainly it is not easy to maintain the state of samadhi during daily activities, and that's why we try our best to exert ourselves in it. Probably the best way to proceed is to form the resolve that, "Today, though a long stretch of time will be difficult, I will try not to lose mindfulness and the true state of samadhi, even for a short while. Even though my eyes behold visual forms, I will try not to let alertness and conscientiousness be overcome or carried away by them. Even when hearing the voice of another person, I will try not to let that rob my presence of mind."

When we train for just a short while in not letting mindfulness slip away, it becomes more easy. Once a short while becomes easy, we can then train in longer periods of time. That's probably the best way.

For example, during our lunch break we will interact with other people, we will converse. Before we arrive in this situation, we should form the frame of mind, "I'm going to sit and eat. There will be talking. But during this time I will try not to become distracted and totally carried away by the topics of conversation. I will try to maintain the continuity of mindfulness." After the one-hour lunch break, we should then reflect on what

happened, thinking, "How successful was I?" That's also a good way to train.

STUDENT: I would like to know if the completion stage training that occurs at the end of the *yidam* practice is the same as the training in the state of samadhi.

RINPOCHE: That depends upon the individual person. At that time in the sadhana practice, if we are familiar with the nonconceptual state of vipashyana, then that is, of course, the same as samadhi. If not, it is more a period of just relaxing and letting the mind take a rest in the quietude of shamatha. In that sense, it is not the same. But once we have recognized the state of samadhi, the true completion stage and the training in Mahamudra are identical.

INCONCEIVABLE QUALITIES

Once again the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror said to Youthful Moonlight: "Youthful one, this being so, a bodhisattva mahasattva who wishes to be unafraid, who wishes to be free of fear and dread, when hearing of the inconceivable and boundless beneficial qualities, should be skilled in teaching the inconceivable buddha qualities. He should yearn for the inconceivable buddha qualities. He should be skilled in inquiring about the inconceivable buddha qualities. He should be skilled in pursuing the inconceivable buddha qualities ... ."

CHAPTER 19

We have now come to the nineteenth chapter of the *King of Samadhi Sutra* which is called "Definitively Stating the Inconceivable Qualities of the Buddhas." The Buddha begins by addressing the bodhisattva Youthful Moonlight. He asks what is necessary for a great bodhisattva, who trains in samadhi, to be free from fear when hearing about the profound qualities of the state of samadhi and to possess fervent yearning towards this training. He or she must become learned and skilled in the inconceivable qualities of the buddhas, including all the virtues of the enlightened Body, enlightened Speech and enlightened Mind. 'Inconceivable' means that the qualities cannot be fully grasped by the intellect of an ordinary person.

In addition to becoming learned and skilled in describing the inconceivable qualities of the awakened state, a bodhisattva who wishes to train in this profound samadhi should develop an ardent longing towards acquiring these same qualities. Knowing the inconceivable qualities of the

buddhas to be special, superior, eminent and profound, and yearning to personally obtain such attributes, the bodhisattva should exhaustively inquire about how to achieve them. The bodhisattva should understand what causes give rise to these qualities, and become skilled in fully and unremittingly pursuing the qualities by training in their causes.

In this way, a great bodhisattva will be free from the fear and the uncertainty of thinking, "I cannot possibly accomplish such inconceivable qualities." Becoming adept in his or her pursuit to realize these great qualities, the bodhisattva will be undaunted and free from anxiety, fear or uncertainty about accomplishing them.

To accomplish fully awakened, complete enlightenment, we must develop absolute confidence in our desire to attain buddhahood. Faith, devotion, and sincere interest are utterly vital. Even though we have to some extent embraced Buddhism and call ourselves 'practitioners,' we sometimes feel that the state of complete enlightenment is not personally attainable. Or we may think that it does not really matter very much whether or not we attain true and complete enlightenment. Such attitudes do arise, yet we should definitely try to eradicate them. This frame of mind probably stems from feeling that buddhahood exists somewhere else, somewhere far away from the world we live in. Since we do not really want to leave our familiar world behind, we may hesitate about going to another place called 'enlightenment.' But actually the state of buddhahood does not exist somewhere else.

Buddhahood can be explained in this way: the Tibetan word for 'buddha' is *sangye*, meaning 'purified perfection.' 'Purified' refers to the elimination of all different kinds of faults and shortcomings which exist within our stream of being. Present within our own state of mind are the causes for negative traits, including the obscuration of disturbing emotions and the cognitive obscuration. These can and should be purified. When such defects are utterly eliminated so that not even a trace remains, this is called *sang* or 'purified' – the first part of the word for 'buddha.'

But, what is the use of merely eradicating the faults in our stream of being? Additional qualities intrinsic to the nature of our mind should then appear. By means of removing all obscurations, we can fully unfold and perfect these inherent enlightened qualities, such as the wisdom that sees the nature as it is and the wisdom that perceives all that is. Thus, 'perfection' is the meaning of *gye*, the second part of the word for 'buddha.'

Therefore, the word *sangye*, 'buddha,' the awakened state, signifies 'purified perfection' in which all negative aspects have been removed and

all positive qualities inherent to the nature of our mind have been fully developed and perfected. Purified perfection is definitely within our reach, but to achieve it, it is very important to understand this potential and to cultivate yearning and devotion towards it.

These three reasons mentioned here are very important. To reiterate: first, we should become skilled in understanding the inconceivable qualities of buddhahood. Secondly, we should develop a yearning and sincere interest in achieving that state. Finally, we should be utterly fearless and undaunted about acquiring the inconceivable qualities of enlightenment. After engendering comprehensive understanding we should learn how to apply this to ourselves as Mahamudra practitioners.

The most exalted methods are the extraordinary preliminaries which include training in taking refuge. 'Taking refuge' means we seek refuge in the objects of refuge, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. There are two ways of taking refuge: the causal approach, taking refuge in terms of causes, and the resultant approach, taking refuge in terms of the result.

To escape from the three realms of samsara, we need to be free from the causes, which are karmic deeds and disturbing emotions. To attain the ultimate safety we must seek an ultimate protection, and where do we find this? The ultimate refuge is achieved when we have purified whatever should be abandoned – the negative attributes of karma, the obscurations, the disturbing emotions – and perfected what should be developed – the enlightened qualities. We ourselves then become the ultimate object of refuge, as we have reached the state of buddhahood. Consequently, the ultimate object of refuge is our own attainment of complete enlightenment. Since we have not reached that point yet, we take refuge in the Three Jewels.

In the great scriptures and treatises, such as the *Uttara Tantra* revealed by Lord Maitreya, the qualities of the Three Precious Jewels are expounded upon. The Precious Dharma and the Precious Sangha are said to be temporary, not ultimate, objects of refuge. Only the Precious Buddha, the state of complete enlightenment, is the ultimate refuge. Why is that?

Concerning the Precious Dharma, both the truth of the path and the truth of cessation are temporary and not ultimate. Since the 'truth of the path' is dependent upon dualistic, conditioned states of mind acting as remedies against confusion, the 'truth of the path' is therefore not unconditioned and not ultimately reliable. Thus, when the states of confusion fall away, so do the remedies. This is what 'conditioned' refers to.

In the first case, the 'truth of the path' is abandoned when its usefulness is exhausted. In the second case, because of being conditioned, the

truth of the path is not ultimately tenable. In other words, having arrived at the end of the path, the path is no longer needed. Because of its nonexistence, the second facet of the Precious Dharma, known as the 'truth of cessation,' is also not an ultimate object of refuge. Simply realizing the nonexistence of an independent nature of disturbing emotions, which lack any real, substantial entity of their own, cannot in itself serve as an ultimate object of refuge. Thus, the two aspects of the Dharma, the truth of path and of cessation, are not the ultimate objects of refuge.

Finally, because it perishes, the Precious Sangha also cannot act as an ultimate object of refuge. Therefore, only the precious state of buddhahood qualifies as the ultimate object of refuge.

In this way, because the attainment of buddhahood is the ultimate achievement, taking refuge in terms of the result, the Buddha, is the exclusive and ultimate object of refuge. To achieve the ultimate object of refuge, we take refuge in terms of the causes. In this sense, there are three causes: the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Regarding the Buddha, we should develop a perception of the Buddha as our teacher because only the fully Awakened One himself can truly and fully show the path that leads to that state. No one else can teach the path in its entirety. Therefore, the Buddha himself is the Supreme Teacher who shows the path to enlightenment.

Regarding the Dharma, the Buddha said, "I cannot remove the suffering of beings with my hand. Nor can realization be transferred to another being." Not even the Buddha, with his great compassion and capabilities, can erase the suffering, the effects of karmic deeds created by sentient beings themselves. Karmic ripening cannot simply be eradicated by the Buddha's touch. Whoever has created karmic deeds will eventually experience the results. Only through our own practice and eventual realization can the negative consequences of our past deeds and obscurations be eliminated.

Furthermore, the Buddha's realization cannot be transmitted to others. The Awakened One cannot beam out his qualities of enlightenment toward all sentient beings and infuse them with enlightened attributes. We have to practice on our own. Enlightened qualities only result from traversing the path.

What then can a buddha do? The Buddha himself answered that question with these words: "I can teach the Dharma that brings peace and tranquillity. Through that, beings can be liberated." The Dharma is taught to sentient beings who are able to receive and put such teachings

into practice, removing their own obscurations and attaining liberation. Therefore, we should perceive the Dharma as the path.

Next, it is said we should develop the notion of the Precious Sangha as our companions and friends on the path. When practicing on the path, we sometimes encounter the obstacles of unfavorable conditions or negative circumstances, both externally and internally. Some of these hindrances take the following form: In the past, we were very devoted and possessed sincere faith in the teachings. Yet somehow, with the passage of time, our faith and devotion stagnated and subsided. This is an unfavorable circumstance. Or, it can be that we are extremely diligent at the outset and very forbearing in our practice. Later, we grow less and less diligent, less and less patient. At the onset of practice we may not have been lazy, indolent or sluggish at all but as time passes we become more and more lazy and careless.

What is needed when encountering such kinds of unfavorable conditions and obstacles? We should associate with genuine spiritual teachers, who can help us overcome these hindrances that represent the inner unfavorable conditions of declining devotion, flagging diligence and increasing laziness. With the assistance of qualified teachers, we can surmount these obstacles by developing devotion and diligence and thus progress on the path. In this way, the members of the noble Sangha should be regarded as companions and helpers on the path.

In addition to the Three Precious Ones, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, the Vajrayana system includes three more objects of refuge: the Three Roots, meaning the Guru as the root of blessings, the Yidam as the root of accomplishment and the Protectors and Guardians as the root of activities. On one hand, these three special objects of refuge are not really different from the Three Jewels, but on the other hand, the Three Roots are classed separately in terms of their special attributes or activities.

First, regarding the guru, the root of blessings: in the context of oral instructions or in the guidance manuals, the root-master is sometimes likened to the Buddha in person, or is sometimes even described as superior to the Buddha. For a beginner in the practice of Buddhadharma, this sounds a little suspicious because we also hear about the extraordinary qualities of the fully enlightened Buddha which are unsurpassed in this world. We may look at our masters, the lineage-holders, and think, "Well, they certainly are special people with great qualities, but they don't seem exactly like a fully and perfectly awakened Buddha." This may seem true; nevertheless, it is a fact that the Buddha appeared in this world more than two thousand years ago, when he awakened to perfect enlightenment,

turned the Wheel of Dharma and finally passed away. In the present, although we have entered the gate of the Dharma and are practicing, we are not able to meet with the Buddha or receive teachings from him in person. Does this mean we are totally out of luck and that there is no way to practice or attain enlightenment because we did not meet the Buddha himself? No, we still have the fortune to receive teachings, and if we truly apply ourselves to these and practice them, we can eliminate the negative qualities and attain enlightenment. Where does this possibility lie? It lies exclusively in our auspicious connection with our personal teacher, our root-master, from whom we can receive the same teachings given by the Buddha, himself. Where did the master receive these teachings? He received them from his own root guru, also a lineage master. In this regard it is said that in the context of our personal situation, our root teacher is more kind and more special to us than the Buddha who lived several thousand years ago, and is superior even to the Buddha. This describes the Master who is the 'root of blessings.'

Secondly, the yidam is called the root of accomplishment. At this point, it is essential to say something about God or 'gods.' In the general Buddhist teachings, it is said that there is neither a God and nor gods. However, this is in the context of declaring that there is no creator of the world, no entity who is the maker of beings' joys and sorrows. All happiness and suffering is the exclusive result of our individual karmic deeds created through past lives. It is not up to some God or gods to decide how the world is formed and how the experiences of sentient beings take place. Moreover, the mundane gods, whom we can say do exist within samsaric existence, are not creators of the world and are not the creators of the joys and sorrows of sentient beings. What is a yidam deity, then? Do we Buddhists claim that the yidam deity creates the world and controls all joy and sorrow? No, we don't.

What is the yidam deity, or the meaning of the term 'root of accomplishment?' We train in the Dharma as the path and accomplishment is the ultimate result of having traversed this path. Generally it is said that the Dharma consists of 84,000 sections. Can we practice all of them? No we can't. Are we supposed to practice all 84,000 sections? No, we are not. Why? Because these 84,000 Dharma sections are meant to cure or change different dispositions and inclinations, being suited to the different capabilities of all sentient beings. Each individual need not practice all 84,000 sections of Dharma. We need only reach the heart or essence of the Buddhadharma, meaning the basic condition or real nature of things, and train in experiencing that.

In terms of training in this basic condition or real nature of things, there are three aspects, called the three kayas: dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya. The dharmakaya is the natural state of suchness itself. When we speak of sambhogakaya, we hear that the yidam deity is the sambhogakaya form of the natural state. To change and purify the habitual tendencies of attachment, anger, passion or aggression, these deities take either peaceful or wrathful forms. Additionally, these male and female wisdom forms symbolize prajna and upaya, or means and knowledge. They remain in these various forms, either male or female, as means and knowledge, peaceful or wrathful, to overcome the disturbing emotions of aggression, passion and so forth. By training in the practice of a yidam deity, which includes the development stage followed by the completion stage, we realize true enlightenment – the ultimate accomplishment. In this way, the yidam deity is the 'root of accomplishment' when applying the sublime Dharma.

The Dharma protectors are said to be the roots of activity. In general, the Sangha functions as companions on the path, and are regarded as emanations of buddhas and bodhisattvas. In the same way, there are buddhas and bodhisattvas who, instead of appearing in the form of flesh-and-blood humans, take the form of natural wisdom which is not perceptible to the eyes of ordinary, mundane people. If we, as practitioners, supplicate them and enjoin them to act for the sake of the Dharma, they will respond by carrying out various activities to remove unfavorable circumstances and increase positive conditions for the Dharma. This is the principle of Dharma protectors, the roots of activity.

Thus, in addition to the Three Precious Ones the Three Roots are a special object of refuge, particularly in the Vajrayana path. I mentioned them in relation to our task of inquiring and pursuing the inconceivable qualities of the awakened state of the buddhas.

This chapter continues by declaring that we should develop strong interest in the inconceivable qualities and tirelessly pursue their attainment. After the Buddha had taught this, the Prince of the Gandharvas, a god of the Desire Realm, appeared with retinues of innumerable celestial musicians who offered music to the Buddha with all kinds of instruments. At that point, the Buddha displayed the tremendous miracle of transforming the sounds emanating from all the various musical instruments into a proclamation of the qualities of enlightenment. The sounds, with their profound meaning, benefited a vast number of beings.

CHAPTER 20

The twentieth chapter bears the title "King Mighty Crest of Victory Banner." In it, compassion is shown to be an indispensable quality for a bodhisattva, as is the need to adhere to a pure and disciplined way of behavior. Furthermore, compassion is taught to be naturally present when we remain in the supreme samadhi state described in this sutra.

Compassion is a natural quality of this state of samadhi. Usually when we hear about samadhi and Mahamudra, it sounds as though more emphasis is put on the emptiness aspect – seeing the true nature of things. But compassion for all beings is also automatically present in this state. As the third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje, said, "Although the nature of beings is always the awakened state, always the buddha, still beings roam throughout endless samsara."

The awakened state of the sugata-garbha or buddha nature, which is the innate nature of suchness, has always been the basic constituent of our own nature. We are never apart from this buddha nature for even an instant. But what happens? Due to the ignorance of being unaware of the nature which we already possess, all sentient beings roam endlessly throughout samsaric existence, creating negative karmic deeds with painful results that they must experience. But they do not really have to undergo these painful experiences, because the essence of mind is the buddha nature, and we all can realize it. By perceiving this dilemma, we will involuntarily and spontaneously give rise to great, all-encompassing compassion for ignorant beings. This is one of the qualities of this samadhi.

When the great nonconceptual state of compassion arises within our stream of being, does that compassion obscure or somehow prevent seeing the natural state? No, it doesn't because as the sublime third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje, explained, "In the moment of love, the empty essence dawns nakedly." When great compassion arises in the moment of nonconceptual wakefulness and we see how all sentient beings suffer, the very essence of this love and compassion we feel is emptiness. In this way, true samadhi is the nature in which emptiness and compassion are an indivisible unity. This is further revealed in a story related in this chapter about a former buddha named King Mighty Crest of Victory Banner. Through this story, the unity of samadhi and compassion was illustrated and countless beings were benefited by being protected from suffering.

EMBODYING DHARMAKAYA

Once again the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror said to Youthful Moonlight: "Youthful one, this being so, a bodhisattva mahasattva should be free of doubt in regards to good roots, the trainings, and all virtuous qualities. He should free himself of many distractions. He should shun evil companions and rely on a spiritual friend. He should thoroughly exert himself in seeking an inquiring attitude towards the Dharma, and should pursue, wish for, take delight in, fully retain, and involve himself in what is conducive to and in harmony with the Dharma. He should develop the notion of all buddhas and bodhisattvas being his teacher. Whomever he hears these Dharma teachings from, he should, with joy and respect, regard as his teacher ... ."

CHAPTER 21

We have now reached the twenty-first chapter of the *King of Samadhi Sutra*, titled "Narration of Past Events." The Buddha begins by declaring that it is extremely important to exert ourselves with great appreciation in the Dharma, to pursue the meaning of and to take delight in practicing the Dharma. Moreover, when we engage in the training of samadhi, it is important to avoid the negative behavior of an ordinary person and an indolent mode of conduct that is evil or unwholesome. A Dharma practitioner should behave in a noble-minded way.

After this, the Buddha recounts a story from the past about two bodhisattvas who kept extremely pure conduct and applied themselves one-pointedly to the training of samadhi while living in a very remote and secluded jungle. While they were practicing samadhi there, a king who

was hunting for deer happened to pass by. He saw the two bodhisattvas meditating, and at once gave rise to strong faith and devotion towards them. They gave him advice, saying, "Your Majesty, the time-span of this life runs out very quickly. There is no point in wasting it on evil deeds. Always be heedful and careful about the way you behave. Give up any evil actions."

At first, the king had great faith in the bodhisattvas. But later on he thought, "Back home in the city, when I consider all the people who seem to practice and understand the Dharma, none maintain such pure behavior as these two bodhisattvas in the forest." Because of this idea, he felt much less respect and appreciation for the other practitioners in his kingdom. As a consequence, he no longer honored and served his regular priests. Due to this, they became very jealous and spread slander about the two bodhisattvas saying, "They are actually non-Buddhists, not Dharma practitioners at all, but just pretenders who act like they are real practitioners. Because they are just pretenders, they should be executed." The king, being fickle-minded, listened to that and the two bodhisattvas were put to death. From this story, we learn that Dharma practice should not be a pursuit of honor and gain, acting in deceptive ways. We should act 100 percent in accordance with the Dharma.

CHAPTER 22

The twenty-second chapter, "Defining the Body," declares the facts of our ordinary body. In this chapter, the Buddha says that a bodhisattva who trains in samadhi and wishes to quickly awaken to complete and perfect enlightenment should not be overly attached to or too fond of this ordinary body.

We hear that the precious human body we now possess is extremely valuable, with a worth that is extraordinary and beyond measure. It is an incredibly great fortune to possess a human body, and is said to be superior even to a wishfulfilling jewel. Why is this? Through the support of this human body, which is comprised of the eight freedoms and ten riches, we can accomplish the perfect welfare of both self and others. Therefore, we should not value it so dearly that we cannot bear the hardship connected with truly doing that. What a waste to possess the precious human body but not use it for a positive end!. That is why the Buddha said, "Do not be too attached to your body and life. Use it fully. Apply it to Dharma practice in order to wholeheartedly benefit self and others." Our physical body and the life force it contains should be used for the

Dharma. Any other hardship we undertake which is not dedicated to this end will bring no real or meaningful result. Therefore, don't be excessively attached to life and limb.

We hear many stories about the Buddha's past lives which illustrate his 'great acts of giving,' such as when he was Prince Vimala who sacrificed his body to a tigress or when he was Prince Chandra Prabha who gave away his head. Are we ordinary people to imitate the Buddha in sacrificing our body and life in the same way? No, we are not. The great bodhisattva Shantideva said, "One should not sacrifice body and life based on impure compassion." Whatever state of compassion we may give rise to prior to arriving at the first bhumi called Truly Joyous is not extraordinary pure compassion. Sacrificing our body and life with compassion that is not completely pure does not yield as great merit as can be achieved in other ways.

Instead of sacrificing our life, we should employ the body fully in the practice of the profound Dharma. Especially we should train in the extraordinary state of samadhi through which we can accomplish the perfect welfare of self. Based on that, in the future, we will be able to possess the quality with which we can benefit other beings in a way that far exceeds the temporary merit of simply sacrificing our body. Therefore, it is said we should not actually sacrifice our body and life for the sake of others, when at this present time we are not truly able to benefit them. Rather, the way of giving and being generous with our body and life is to fully embrace the Dharma teachings, in particular the profound state of samadhi, with the motivation to benefit all beings.

CHAPTER 23

Once again the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror said to Youthful Moonlight: "Youthful one, this being so, a bodhisattva mahasattva who aspires to this samadhi, and who wishes to quickly awaken truly and fully to unexcelled true and complete enlightenment, should not view the tathagata as a form-body. Why is this? This is because all buddhas, the Transcendent Perfect Conquerors, are defined by the dharmakaya. They are not defined by the form-body."

"Youthful one, a bodhisattva mahasattva who aspires toward the body of the tathagata, and who wishes to understand the body of the tathagata, should memorize, comprehend, retain, read, recite, give readings of and daily chant, practice, exert himself in the training, and, as well, teach widely to others, this King of Samadhi ... ."

Since the twenty-second chapter was not very long, we now come to the twenty-third chapter, "Defining the Body of the Tathagata." Here, the Buddha says, "In order to give rise to the supreme samadhi, it is essential to develop faith and devotion in the Buddha."

When we think of the Buddha, we usually imagine the beautiful physical form of Buddha Shakyamuni, endowed with the 32 major and 80 minor marks of excellence. This way of thinking is the most eminent support for giving rise to pure faith and devotion and for gathering the accumulation of merit. Although this is certainly true, in this present context of describing how to approach the profound state of samadhi, the Buddha says, "Do not regard the Tathagata as a form. Regard him as the [embodiment of the] qualities of the dharmakaya, the Dharma Body." What does this mean? 'Form' here means matter. Of course the enlightened state possesses three kayas, but the form-body is not the true buddha. It means we should not think of the Buddha as being composed of physical characteristics, but should consider him as the embodiment of dharmakaya. 'Dharmakaya' means the 'body of enlightened qualities.' This is the ultimate way of regarding the Buddha.

In terms of wisdom, this refers to the perfect twofold wisdoms – the wisdom that knows the nature of all things as they are and the wisdom that perceives all things, whatever exists. Or, as it is explained in the great treatise *Uttara Tantra*, the dharmakaya is defined as the three great qualities of perfect knowledge, perfect love and perfect capability. Thus, the buddha is the wisdom-dharmakaya endowed with these three qualities. In short, we develop faith and devotion in the Buddha by pondering his immense qualities and virtues – not merely the qualities of his bodily form, but the qualities that are the various aspects of the dharmakaya.

Of course, the physical form and the voice of the Buddha are most supreme and endowed with tremendous excellent qualities. Keeping these in mind is a perfect support for cultivating pure devotion and faith. Yet, in ultimate terms, what is the true origin of these perfect enlightened qualities of Body and Speech? They come about exclusively through the strength of his mind, the dharmakaya, which is endowed with all the most perfect wisdom qualities. That is the true source of the enlightened Body, enlightened Speech and the inconceivable enlightened activity endowed with the capacity to benefit others in numerous ways. Therefore, the Bud-

dha says here, "Since the basis for a buddha's body and speech is the wisdom qualities of dharmakaya, do not regard the Tathagata as a form-body. Regard him as the dharmakaya."

CHAPTER 24

Now, we have arrived at the twenty-fourth chapter, entitled "The Inconceivable Qualities of the Tathagata." It was mentioned in the previous chapter that the true Buddha is the dharmakaya and that the qualities of the dharmakaya are inconceivable, beyond ordinary concepts. The Buddha then discloses four correct discriminations which act as the causes for realizing these inconceivable wisdom qualities of dharmakaya. The bodhisattva wishing to realize the state of buddhahood should apply him or herself to these four correct discriminations: the correct discrimination of dharmas, of meaning, of definitive words, and of courageous eloquence.

To comprehend the first of these four, the 'correct discrimination of dharmas,' it is necessary to understand the word 'dharma.' Dharma is a Sanskrit term and it has different connotations in different contexts. Sometimes the word 'dharma' refers to any knowable entity, to any thing which can be taken as an object of understanding. Sometimes the word 'dharma' means the path which leads to the great bodhisattva stages of enlightenment. Sometimes the word 'dharma' refers to the spiritual teachings we ourselves engage in. In this context, the 'correct discrimination of dharmas' refers to all knowable phenomena or entities which can be taken as an object of understanding. Here they are divided into the five aggregates, such as the aggregate of form. 'Form' is defined as anything we experience that can be categorized as belonging to physical form. All these things together, taken as one whole, is called the aggregate of form. To truly perceive and correctly understand the true nature of form is called the 'correct discrimination of form,' which is one aspect of the various dharmas.

Not only are we to fully comprehend the nature of external forms; we are also to investigate that which concerns our minds, consisting of both primary cognitive acts and mental states. The main mental state is that of sensation, as sensations are the basis for all different kinds of attachment and clinging. Taken as a whole, these sensations are called the skandha or aggregate of sensations. Perceiving the true nature of sensation is called the 'correct discrimination of sensation.'

Similarly, the mental event of correctly discerning the different attributes of phenomena is called 'conception' (usually translated as perception). This is the third of the five skandhas. Truly and correctly understanding the nature of conception is the 'correct discrimination' of conception.

After that, 'formation' is that which fully forms all things, so seeing the real condition of that is the 'correct discrimination of the aggregate of formations.'

Finally, since the primary state of mind is the act of cognizing, of 'consciousness,' all the different types of cognition are together called the aggregate of consciousness. Correctly perceiving the true nature of cognition is called the 'correct discrimination of consciousness.' In this way, the 'correct discrimination of dharmas' is to truly and correctly perceive the true nature of the five aggregates.

In this chapter, the Buddha describes this principle under 'four aspects.' There are many different ways to summarize such categories, such as the 'four primary statements of a bodhisattva,' the 'four entrances of a bodhisattva,' and the 'four words of a bodhisattva.' Although the Buddha taught numerous such categories, we can summarize these entrances, statements, and words into one single fourfold principle.

The first of these four principles is the 'inconceivable number of different states of formation.' All our experiences of this world, everything that occurs, comes about through the forming of objects perceived and the mind that perceives and apprehends these objects. Among the aggregates, this process of 'forming' experience through primary acts of cognition and the subsequent mental states is called 'formation.' The outer grasped object and the inner fixating mind arise, thus forming all the various, innumerable and inconceivable ways of experience.

Secondly, it is important to fully understand this inconceivable number of different states of formation of experience. To fully understand them, it is necessary for the teachings to be expounded. Therefore, the second of the 'four principles' is the 'inconceivable ways of expounding the states of formation.' This means to expound the sacred Dharma for others.

Unless we understand the nature of how experience is formed, we cannot eliminate the causes and effects of samsaric existence, here called 'affliction.' The causes are disturbing emotions and karmic deeds, and their resultant effects are the painful states experienced within samsara. All of these are called the 'inconceivable states of total affliction,' which is a synonym for samsaric existence.

On the other hand, if we truly know how to eliminate the causes and effects of the painful states of samsaric existence, we can achieve the ultimate state of true and complete enlightenment, omniscient buddhahood. This

state of complete enlightenment is here called the 'inconceivable state of total perfection.'

In short, the four principles are: formation, the explanation of formation, total affliction and total perfection. All other categories, such as the four primary statements of a bodhisattva, the four gates or entrances of a bodhisattva and so forth, follow these 'four principles.'

The second of the four correct discriminations is called the 'correct discrimination of meaning.' 'Meaning' embraces both the conditioned and unconditioned 'dharmas,' as well as 'dharmata.' Dharmas, or conditioned things, represent relative truth. The correct discrimination of conditioned, relative truth is to perceive truly and fully the nature of all conditioned states of experience, exactly as they are. It is also necessary to perceive the unconditioned state of dharmata, what is ultimately true. Truly and correctly perceiving the nature of both the relative and ultimate truth is called the 'correct discrimination of meaning.'

Next is the 'correct discrimination of definitive words.' To fully comprehend dharmas, phenomena and meaning, and to be able to explain them to others, we must use words and names. It is not enough just to perceive the meaning. The meaning must be connected to the words and names which refer to this meaning. To fully and correctly comprehend how to use all the various words and names in their proper way is called the 'correct discrimination of definitive words.' This is the third of the four correct discriminations.

The fourth is called the 'correct discrimination of courageous eloquence.' The word for this in Tibetan is *pobpa*, which refers to the mental state that gives rise to such courageous eloquence. This quality is a self-assured sharpness of mind, an absence of error. Through such 'unmistakenness' we can both comprehend clearly and without error the meaning of phenomena and the definitive words, as well as be unimpeded in expounding these to others. To fully comprehend without any defect, and to possess such courage, is what is meant by the 'correct discrimination of courageous eloquence.'

Chapter 25

The twenty-fifth chapter is called "Engaging in the Correct Discriminations," which includes the four just mentioned.

The first is the 'correct discrimination of dharmas.' Correctly discriminating involves seeing the real condition of things, usually called ultimate truth. At this point the Buddha declares, "Do not see the truly awakened

state as separate from physical form. Do not pursue an awakened state of enlightenment apart from physical form. Do not regard the awakened state of enlightenment as something apart from physical form." What the Buddha says here is that the essence of form is itself the awakened state. This sounds very much like what is taught in the *Heart Sutra of Transcendent Knowledge*, where there is the famous statement about the 'intent of fourfold emptiness,' meaning that form is emptiness, emptiness is form, form is no other than emptiness, and emptiness is no other than form.

The first of these, 'form is emptiness,' means that form, itself, is by nature devoid of any independent, concrete existence. In other words, it is empty by nature and therefore natural emptiness.

Second, 'emptiness is form,' means that emptiness is not found somewhere else after having rejected form. Emptiness is simply the very identity of form; you do not have to eliminate form in order for emptiness to appear. Form and emptiness are not contradictory. If emptiness could be something that exists apart from form, then form would necessarily have a true independent existence, which it does not. Therefore, emptiness is form.

Consequently, the third statement is 'emptiness is no other than form,' which means the state of emptiness is not something separate from or other than form. It is not that you have emptiness on one side and form on the other. Fourth, 'form is no other than emptiness.' There is no form separate from or other than emptiness.

In this way, the term 'fourfold emptiness' means that emptiness is the very identity of form, and because its identity is emptiness, that which is perceived by us as a physical form is from the very outset indivisible from emptiness. What we should understand in this context of the four correct discriminations is that all phenomena are indivisible from emptiness, and that the relative and ultimate modes are not separate entities.

In the same way as he described the fourfold emptiness in regard to form, the Buddha continues with the remaining aggregates: the aggregate of sensations, of conceptions, of formations and of consciousnesses. For example, in the case of sensations, 'sensation is emptiness, the identity of emptiness is sensation.' The identity or essence of sensation is emptiness. 'Sensations are no other than emptiness, emptiness is no other than sensations.'

We can understand through our own meditation experience how this principle holds true for the other four aggregates, since they are all aspects of mind. Sensations are by their very nature devoid of any concrete entity. They are empty. Yet, at the same time, whether we speak of sensations,

perceptions, mental formations, or cognitions, all that we call 'mind' is, by nature, empty. We can not find any concrete entity that can be called 'mind.' It is, by nature, emptiness. But, at the same time, the word emptiness is defined due to something being devoid of a nature, something which exists within superficial mistaken experience. In other words, emptiness is not separate from the nature of these things which we are talking about to begin with – the four other aggregates. There is no emptiness which exists separate from the identity of our deluded perceptions.

This means that our mind, our experience, is not something other than emptiness and emptiness does not exist apart from our experience.

This is something we can not only intellectually comprehend and understand through reasoning: in our meditation training we can simply look and see that this is how it is in actuality. It can be discovered within our own experience.

This completes the twenty-fifth chapter in the *King of Samadhi Sutra.*

At this point, it is important to say that since this *King of Samadhi Sutra* is used as the background or supportive teaching for Mahamudra training, it is to be practiced in a way that transcends mere scholarly intellectualizing or speculating about the meaning. We should instead assimilate the meaning found in this sutra by practicing the state of samadhi. We should try to experience what is stated here through our own meditation practice. Up until today, I have merely been talking about emptiness and samadhi, rather in the vein of a dry scholar, which is not good enough. Instead, let us all try to practice meditation now.

AN ATTITUDE OF CONNECTEDNESS

Once again the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror said to Youthful Moonlight: "Youthful one, this being so, a bodhisattva mahasattva who aspires to achieve this samadhi, and who wishes to quickly awaken truly and fully to unexcelled true and complete enlightenment, should be skilled in means. Youthful one, how does a bodhisattva mahasattva become skilled in means? Youthful one, a bodhisattva mahasattva should keep an attitude of connectedness to all sentient beings. A bodhisattva mahasattva should thus rejoice in the good roots of sentient beings and in whatever merit they may have. Three times a day and three times a night, he should rejoice in the good roots of all beings and in their accumulation of merit, and then, with the resolve aimed at the state of omniscience, he should give away his good roots and accumulated merit to all sentient beings."

"Youthful one, by possessing the merit resulting from being skilled in means, this bodhisattva mahasattva will quickly attain this samadhi, and he will quickly awaken truly and fully to unexcelled true and complete enlightenment."

CHAPTER 26

All the chapters in the *King of Samadhi Sutra* up through the twenty-fifth mainly cover how to train in the practice of samadhi itself. But from chapters twenty-six on, they are more oriented towards the behavior and conduct of a bodhisattva.

In the twenty-sixth chapter, which is called "Rejoicing," the Buddha says to Youthful Moonlight, "If you, a great bodhisattva, wish to train in

the state of samadhi, you should regard all sentient beings as being your own relatives. Consider that the causes, the roots of virtue, and the resulting happiness are worth rejoicing in. Without any envy or jealousy, rejoice in the virtue and happiness of all sentient beings."

The disturbing emotion of envy or jealousy is something to be abandoned, and can be categorized as a form of the mental state of attachment. It arises due to our selfish desire for pleasure and happiness. When other people are enjoying abundance, happiness, and pleasure, we disdain this, by having the attitude, "I myself should be happy, not someone else." When contemplating the virtuous actions that other beings create through their thought, word and deed, which will later on result in pleasure and happiness, we again feel disdain and resentment. This type of jealousy should definitely be abandoned by a bodhisattva practitioner.

The great master and son of the Victorious Ones, Shantideva, taught that we should rejoice even in the virtuous actions of an ordinary person – someone who has not entered the path of a bodhisattva, nor even that of a shravaka or pratyekabuddha – but who still, due to virtuous actions performed in this or past lives, experiences abundant happiness at this time. When ordinary people, out of a good heart, create roots of virtue through honest and straightforward actions that later on will result in pleasant experiences, we should, as bodhisattva practitioners, rejoice without any jealousy whatsoever.

People who strive to achieving a happy, pleasant state of existence in this life, or in future lives within samsara, are called people of lesser capacity. People of higher capacity strive to eliminate the causes for further samsara and achieve the state of liberation from all samsaric existence. This type includes the shravaka and pratyekabuddha mentalities. However excellent this attitude may be, it does not possess the superior attitude that embraces all sentient beings and aims at liberating them from samsara. Even though the shravaka and pratyekabuddha are considered to possess an inferior motivation, they are still extremely fortunate. They may not be pursuing the highest path, but it is definitely an unmistaken and sublime path. Eliminating the causes of disturbing emotions and negative karma that perpetuate samsaric existence will lead them towards the state of an *arhat*, a 'slayer of the enemies.' There are actually numerous beings who do achieve the state of arhathood in which suffering is no longer experienced and total liberation from samsaric existence is attained. This is definitely something to rejoice in as well.

Higher than that is the path of a bodhisattva. The Mahayana practitioner's attitude is not merely aimed at personally achieving happiness.

Instead, their motivation is vast and expansive and includes the wish to rescue and protect all sentient beings from painful, samsaric states and establish them in liberation and enlightenment. Not merely do they have the wish to do so, they also exert themselves in the great deeds of a bodhisattva, the four immeasurables and the six paramitas. By directly and indirectly benefiting other sentient beings and protecting them from suffering, they journey along the path of a bodhisattva. They accomplish the temporary states of achievement, which are the first bhumi, called the Truly Joyous, up until the tenth bhumi, called the Cloud of Dharma. When they realize the ultimate achievement, the true and complete state of enlightenment, that is something we can rejoice in, thinking how wonderful such bodhisattvas are.

At all times and in all situations, we should train ourselves in rejoicing in the virtue of others, no matter on what level it is created. We may think that it is of utmost importance to continually remain in the state of samadhi, the ultimate state of emptiness, and this is of course true. Nevertheless, training in a good heart and pure motivation and rejoicing in the virtue of others helps us progress in the state of samadhi meditation. Even if we have already progressed, it helps to stabilize and enhance the state of samadhi in order to reach final fruition. Therefore, here the Buddha taught the twenty-sixth chapter which stresses the importance of rejoicing.

CHAPTER 27

After rejoicing in the virtues of others, we must apply ourselves to the practices of a bodhisattva. In the twenty-seventh chapter, entitled "Benefits of Giving," the Buddha teaches the benefits of training in the six or ten paramitas. He begins by explaining the benefits of generosity or great giving.

All the paramitas have purpose and benefit. The Buddha teaches that the paramita of generosity has ten benefits. The first is that by being generous, we will bring an end to miserliness and stinginess. Among all the different disturbing emotions, stinginess is a very close-minded state which should definitely be abandoned through generosity. So, the first benefit of generosity is to cut through stinginess.

Secondly, by repeatedly training in and growing accustomed to a generous frame of mind, we will be able to promote this attitude more and more. Thus, the second quality is that the attitude of giving increases further and further.

Generosity also ensures that the wealth of many people can be shared and used in various ways to benefit the whole of society. In any society, we can see that an advanced level of progress and affluence can be used to either benefit or harm. By means of a generous attitude, a bodhisattva can help put the general shared wealth of human beings to good use. The third quality is thus to ensure that wealth yields the excellent result of prosperity and welfare for all.

The next quality involves the ripening of karmic effects. In the future, the bodhisattva who has grown familiar with the attitude of generosity and formed this habitual tendency will not be born in an impoverished place, but will take rebirth in a family possessing great wealth and prominence. Directly upon taking birth there, the bodhisattva will again actualize the generous frame of mind that increases prosperity.

The fifth quality is that by training in developing generosity wherever we go, whoever we meet will appreciate and like us. This is an additional effect of having been generous in a past life.

The sixth quality is that regardless of where we go or who we associate with, we never experience any fear or intimidation. We are never afraid to face other people.

The seventh quality is that we will always be praised and respected, and will not be criticized or slandered.

In addition, the Buddha says, our feet and hands will be smooth, soft and even. The quality of very soft, smooth hands and feet, among the excellent major and minor marks of a buddha, stems from the soft, gentle state of a generous mind which acts tenderly towards everyone. We will also have a very steady gait, with steps firmly planted on the ground.

The last of the ten qualities is that from now until the achievement of perfect enlightenment we will never lack opportunities to meet spiritual guides. We will always have guidance. This concludes the twenty-seventh chapter which describes the benefits of generosity.

CHAPTER 28

The twenty-eighth chapter, "Defining Discipline," describes the benefits of the paramita of discipline.

Discipline is to be observed with our body, speech and mind. Primarily, however, it concerns our mind: being concentrated, as well as being careful, conscientious and mindful, are all vital for spiritual training. Training in these three qualities, we are able to progress in samadhi and meditation. But is it not only through mental discipline that we can really progress. Our physical actions and the way we speak must be disciplined as well, in order to support mental progress in samadhi practice and other spiritual qualities. It is very important to maintain discipline by being careful and conscientious about how we behave and speak. Pure discipline thus helps and supports progress in meditation practice.

The Buddha mentions ten benefits that arise by fully training in the paramita of discipline. First, we will always be accompanied by wisdom. The state of wakefulness will arise again and again in our experience when we remain gentle and disciplined. If we are heedless and undisciplined, the state of wakefulness is continually forgotten. It just slips away. Therefore, it is very important to be gentle, mindful and disciplined in order to recall the state of samadhi and train in it to progress and reach the final result.

We will follow in the footsteps of the training of all buddhas by being disciplined. We will not be despised by the buddhas and bodhisattvas or criticized by learned people, meaning that masters will feel that our actions are worthwhile. We will not be rejected. Next, by following pure discipline we will not stray from any promise or pledge we undertake, but will, by means of our discipline, stick to our commitments. The fifth, sixth and seventh qualities are that we persevere in Dharma practice, remain distant from and untainted by samsaric states, and eventually achieve the qualities of nirvana. The last qualities mentioned illustrate that a disciplined state of mind will always remain free from disturbing emotions, will fully achieve the state of samadhi, and will not be impoverished, meaning poor in good qualities. These are the qualities which result from training ourselves to be disciplined in thought, word and deed and thereby attaining stability in meditation.

Speaking generally about morality, there is the code of discipline for mind, which is the most important, and the discipline for physical and verbal behavior, which includes the precepts for renunciates and householders. The foremost type of discipline is to observe the precepts of a fully ordained monk or nun. It is also excellent to keep the pure discipline of a Buddhist layperson.

Being both wise and compassionate, the Buddha taught the sacred Dharma to others on their own terms, according to their own capacity. He directly perceived that people possess different capabilities. Some are able to keep the full level of discipline, which refers to the precepts of monks, nuns and novices, while others are not able to do so. The Buddha then prescribed the precepts for male and female lay people.

The Buddha taught according to the ability of the individual listener. Someone who could keep all the levels of discipline would be able to take the precepts of avoiding all types of negative actions, while those who could not abide in this way could take a smaller number of precepts. There are many ways in which this is possible. It is never said that everyone is able to, and therefore must, observe all the precepts.

For example, the vows of a male or female layperson involve five primary precepts: to abstain from sexual misconduct, killing, lying, stealing and taking alcohol. These precepts ensure that we will have a gentle, relaxed, stable and tranquil frame of mind. The male or female layperson who accepts all five vows is called 'a lay-person observing all five precepts in completeness.' Some people may be willing to undertake all five, while others may think, "I cannot observe all five vows. There is one that I cannot commit myself to." Someone who takes four of the five vows is called 'a lay-person who observes almost all five precepts.' If we take only two or three vows, we are called a 'layperson observing several precepts.' Even if we take just one vow, we are 'a layperson who observes one precept.' Taking just one of the five primary precepts is permissible and results in great benefit.

If we are unable to take even one precept, there is still a solution. During the time of the Buddha, one of his chief disciples, named Katyayana, visited a village and expounded the Dharma. In the village lived a butcher who killed many animals. Katyayana told him that he should at least try to take one of the five precepts, but the butcher replied, "How can I do that? I would like to take a precept, but I'm a butcher. I have to kill animals because it's my livelihood. Without killing, I wouldn't have a job." Katyayana said, "Yes, but there is still a way. You kill sentient beings in the daytime, but must you also kill beings at night?" The butcher said, "No, I don't." So, Katyayana said, "Take the vow, form the resolve, that at nightfall you will not kill any more beings." The story goes that, having taken this vow, the butcher gained great benefit. In this way, being a lay follower of the Buddha and keeping as much discipline as we are able to yields great advantages. When training in samadhi and meditation, we need as much mental stability as possible and keeping precepts helps us do so.

There is immense benefit in taking precepts and observing them to the best of our ability. Taking the vow by forming the mental resolve, "I will not kill others," is enormously different from simply refraining from killing. At first glance, we may believe that it is fine merely not to kill other beings. But in fact there is much more benefit in forming the vow to refrain from killing others. The difference lies in that after we have taken a

vow, we will remember, "I have decided not to kill," in which case we gain the merit of that decision.

For example, if a cat were to sleep the whole day and during that time did not kill any other animals, would it gain the merit of having abandoned killing? No, it would not. It merely avoids the negative karma of killing, but no additional advantage is gained because when it wakes up the cat is ready to kill again. Whereas if we have taken the vow or precept not to kill, the imprint will remain in our mind, increasing further roots of virtue. When the chance to kill appears, we will abstain from the negative action. So, try your best to take the vows to abstain from negative actions.

CHAPTER 29

The twenty-ninth chapter, "The Ten Benefits," defines the paramita of patience, and those of diligence, concentration, and *dhyana*. The benefits of cultivating patience are also mentioned as ten: remaining unharmed by fire, not being killed by weapons, not being poisoned, not drowning, protected by divine beings and so forth. There are many such advantages. Why? When not actively trying to be patient, it is our nature to be irritated, to get angry and aggressive. An angry person will meet with plenty of hostility. When we train in patience, we will not give rise to anger and will therefore not have any enemies. Enemies are created by our own anger, which generates hostility and enmity in others so that they retaliate with weapons, poison and the like. When we train in not becoming angry, we will have fewer enemies.

Furthermore, we will be protected by gods, and, in future lives, we will be reborn in a form that is adorned with the major and minor marks. Moreover, the door to the lower realms of existence will be shut tight and we will without difficulty take rebirth in the higher realms. Day and night, we will have no enmity and can remain at peace, without fear of being harmed. Our physical body will be pleasant, be free from pain and misery, etc. These are the benefits of the bodhisattva who trains in patience.

There are also ten benefits accompanying the paramita of diligence. We will be accepted by all the buddhas and divine beings. We will not digress from the Dharma teachings we have heard, and will not forget them, but, due to our own exertion and practice, we will retain what we have learned and will hear new teachings which we have not heard before. We will achieve the different states of concentration and samadhi. In this way, there are altogether ten benefits.

Following this the Buddha mentions ten benefits of concentration and ten benefits of discriminating knowledge, which are the last two of the six paramitas. Since the *King of Samadhi Sutra* explains the benefits of meditation from the very outset, the benefits of these last two paramitas have been explained already within the text.

The cause for the arising of discriminating knowledge is learning and studying. It is very important to study and learn the Buddha's words, what the Buddha said, as well as the treatises clarifying his statements. By studying the oral or pith instructions of the masters, we gain great benefit. The Buddha therefore mentions the ten benefits of detailed study.

First, we will not become involved in afflicted states of mind or the disturbing emotions, because of having learned of their demerits, and understanding the teachings, we will be less disturbed and agitated. We will not want to be hostile towards others because we have understood the negative results connected with that. Having learned the details of the Buddhadharma, we will be able to clarify doubts and uncertainty. We will not remain in some indeterminate, unclear mental state, nor be lost in doubt. In other words, study of the Dharma will clear up any doubts and uncertainty, because of clearly understanding the nature of things.

Moreover, learning and studying ensures that our view, our orientation, becomes direct and straightforward. Next, we will avoid taking an errant path; we will follow the excellent eminent path to enlightenment. We will 'abide at the door of immortality' – 'immortality' meaning liberation from samsara. We will approach complete enlightenment, awaken to buddhahood. We will be able to illuminate all sentient beings; that is, when we arrive at complete and perfect buddhahood, we will be able to flawlessly teach the Dharma to all sentient beings. Finally, we will remain fearless of the lower realms of existence. Those are the ten qualities or benefits arising from detailed learning.

Having listened to Dharma teachings and understood, to some extent, we should not just leave it at that. It is very important to share our understanding with others. In other words, a bodhisattva should not learn just for his or her own sake, but should aspire to teach others. Whether we know a little bit or a lot, we should still be willing to teach the Dharma to others. The advantage in this is that other will people learn while we ourselves will progress on the path. The Buddha mentions the following ten personal benefits which result when the bodhisattva engages in expounding the Dharma to other people, also called the 'giving of Dharma teachings.'

KING OF SAMADHI

First, we will fully abandon unvirtuous activities – literally 'what is not to be done.' If we do not know any Dharma, we cannot know the difference between good and evil actions. But if we have studied to some extent and, especially if we are repeating what is correct to others, then automatically we ourselves will understand what is right and wrong and will therefore avoid negative activities.

Second, we will engage in virtuous activities and abide by the principles of sublime beings. This is only possible if we have studied and understood the Dharma to some extent ourselves. Otherwise, we are unable to do so. When expounding the teachings to others, this will help strengthen us to abide by the principles of noble beings, doing what is wholesome and meaningful.

Next, we will 'fully purify the realm of enlightenment,' which means we are planting the seeds for the state of complete enlightenment. Teaching others will help us to achieve the supreme essence of enlightenment. We will be extremely generous with material possessions and cut through the disturbing emotions. We will be generous in that we give others their share of fortune in Dharma teachings. Also, we will train ourselves in the attitude of loving kindness. Finally, we will achieve a state of ease and well-being within this lifetime. These are the qualities a bodhisattva achieves through the generosity of giving Dharma teachings to others. These qualities in turn help us to train in samadhi and develop further stability.

Following that, the Buddha describes the ten qualities which result from establishing the view of emptiness, and then the benefits resulting from training in samadhi meditation. Since much of the *King of Samadhi Sutra* is devoted to describing this, it has already been explained in detail.

Afterwards, the Buddha explains the ten benefits of remaining in seclusion. The word 'seclusion' is *gönpa* in Tibetan. In earlier times this referred to an isolated place or a remote retreat area where one spent the entire time training in samadhi. But nowadays this term should be understood more in the sense of dwelling in a spiritual community, a Dharma center where people live in accordance with the principles of the Dharma.

Ten qualities result from living in seclusion. Being distant from society, we are able to remain less involved in negative activities and are more able to focus on Dharma practice. This is the first of the ten benefits: we will be less involved in actions that are counterproductive to the spiritual path. Outside a spiritual community, we tend to be caught up in all kinds of unwholesome doings.

Living in seclusion, we are far from the diversions of the worldly hustle and bustle of ordinary aims and pursuits. We remain free from strife,

because living either in seclusion or in a truly spiritual community, there are no causes, no basis, for becoming involved in disharmony and divisiveness which arise in a normal, everyday community where people argue and bicker. We would remain free from harm inflicted by others. We would not become involved in the promotion of defilement, meaning disturbing emotions, or creating the basis for discord. We would be able to behave in an utterly serene and peaceful way.

Moreover, living in seclusion, we are able to completely maintain the precepts we have taken. We would continuously cultivate the state conducive to liberation and enlightenment so that we can quickly attain the state of liberation in actuality.

Finally, the Buddha proclaims the ten qualities of abiding by the principles of a mendicant, which are almost identical with the virtues and qualities of keeping discipline which we have already reviewed.

This concludes the twenty-ninth chapter of the *King of Samadhi Sutra*. If you have any doubts or questions to be cleared up, please ask now.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

STUDENT: Yesterday, when Rinpoche explained about the skandhas, I was confused about the exact distinction between the third and fourth skandha because you characterized the third skandha as both perception and conception. Aren't these two different words? Would Rinpoche differentiate between these two skandhas?

RINPOCHE: First, regarding the aggregate of formation, in Tibetan *duje*, our consciousness somehow becomes involved in or 'forms' a mental state. Usually there are 51 virtuous and unvirtuous mental states included within the skandha of formations. The unvirtuous states are the disturbing emotions, while the virtuous states are compassion and so forth. However, in any of these states the consciousness, our attention, becomes involved in the object concerned or caught up in that state. This kind of involvement is what is translated as 'formation.' That is the basic definition of the fourth skandha.

The second and third among the five aggregates, which are the aggregate of sensations and the aggregate of conceptions, usually translated as the aggregate of perceptions, are included within the fourth aggregate of formations because they are both mental events, mental states which occur accompanying actions. Yet, there is a reason why they are singled out and given their own headings as 'aggregates' in themselves. The reason for this is that 'sensation' is the basis for why sentient beings become involved in

attachment, aversion, arguments and disquietude. Because of being extremely attached to pleasant sensations and particularly hostile towards unpleasant sensations, this aspect of 'sensation' is considered very important and classified as one of the five aggregates. The second aggregate of feelings or sensations refers to pleasure, pain and so forth.

The third aggregate, the aggregate of conceptions or perceptions is simply this: mentally formulating what is perceived, such as saying, "This is red," when perceiving the color red, or "That is blue," when seeing blue, or "That is a man. That is a woman." We mentally formulate what the content of the experience is. This is very important because people use this as the basis for argument or strife, thinking, "This is right. That is wrong. This is good. That is bad," and become quite involved because of these judgments. That is why the third aggregate of conception or perception has its own place among the five aggregates.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, you mentioned earlier that a buddha cannot transmit his realization to other beings and also cannot toss them up into a buddhafield. If this is so, then how are we to understand the function of blessings?

RINPOCHE: There is a difference. A blessing from a master or buddha is not able to remove the negative karma of sentient beings, nor can their enlightened qualities be transferred to us. This is not the meaning of a 'blessing.' A blessing is more in the sense of the occurrence of 'power' and this power is not necessarily handed over by the master. Thinking of his qualities or hearing about the qualities of enlightenment causes the interest and yearning in our state of mind to grow stronger – the power of strength occurs. Based on this, our interest in meditation practice increases and we are able to progress. Also, by hearing or thinking about the negative aspects of samsaric existence, and especially the negative aspects of our own disturbing emotions, we become less fond of disturbing emotions and samsara. Because of the great power or strength of these feelings, of our disenchantment with deluded involvement, we are able to exert ourselves wholeheartedly in meditation practice. That is what is called a 'blessing.' Blessings are not a 'thing' handed down from one person to another.

STUDENT: You say that we should not be content with just having heard teachings, but we should help others understand the Dharma. How then can we ordinary people be free from the ambition for material gain or fame or dwelling on the idea of oneself as the 'teacher' with 'disciples'?

RINPOCHE: We definitely must be careful and guard our own mind against being caught up in those notions. While trying to be free from the

ideas of gain, fame, pride, and conceit, there is benefit in teaching the Dharma to others. Whether we are learned or not very learned, whether we have achieved signs of accomplishment or not, if, out of pure motivation, we have the wish to help other people understand the Dharma, there is certainly benefit.

Sometimes, it happens that a friend can help another friend better than his or her teacher. If the master or teacher makes a statement, the person will just agree, "Yes, it really is like that." But if a close friend makes a similar observation in a more intimate way, it's possible that the message will really 'hit home,' and that we suddenly gain a clearer understanding.

POLISHING OUR UNDERSTANDING

Once again the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror said to Youthful Moonlight: "Youthful one, this being so, you should also train in attaining excellence, renouncing even the pleasures of the kingdom of a divine universal monarch."

CHAPTER 30

We have now reached Chapter Thirty in the *King of Samadhi Sutra*. In this chapter, called "King Mound of Majestic Splendor," the Buddha relates a story from a past lifetime as a universal monarch. Using this story, the Buddha illustrates the necessity of forsaking an entire kingdom, abandoning all its splendor, riches and enjoyments. After doing that, it is necessary to go into seclusion and, as urgently as though our hair were on fire, to pursue training in the state of samadhi. To hold the status of a world ruler with all the wealth, abundance and enjoyments this includes is merely a temporary achievement. However, the attainment of the state of samadhi is not temporary or transient but is the direct cause for achieving permanent happiness. In this way, rather than becoming attached to fleeting pleasures, even to the seemingly perfect, luxurious position of a world ruler, we should abandon such attachment and pursue the training in samadhi.

Practicing the Dharma, and especially training in samadhi, is more important than anything else. We can see by Milarepa's life example how he practiced with tremendous diligence. He undertook enormous hardship to train himself in the state of samadhi. He lacked suitable garments or proper food and he survived merely by eating nettles.

We may wonder, "Is Dharma practice just an exercise in hardship?" Is there no way around undertaking hardship in order to accomplish the

Dharma? No, it is not like that. Milarepa decided himself that Dharma practice was much more important than chasing after food and clothing. He focused on Dharma practice with great diligence. Milarepa's life is an example for appreciating the importance of Dharma practice and meditation, rather than placing emphasis on food and clothing. We should understand that no amount of luxuries, no quantity of food, clothing, wealth, property and so forth, not even the perfect, mundane state of a world ruler, can compare with the importance of practicing the Dharma, especially the training in samadhi.

I feel that all of us already understand this principle; we all consider Dharma practice and samadhi training to be much more important than acquiring more material things. In itself this is the intent of the thirtieth chapter. However, we must continually cultivate a deep-felt motivation. Understanding the importance and preciousness of Dharma practice and, in particular, the training in samadhi, we give rise to the aspiration, "I will embrace such training and apply myself to the practice of the sacred Dharma." However, if our training takes a long time we may not be able to sustain our initial motivation. It is possible that occasionally our resolve weakens and our diligence and exertion dwindles. This is called a temporary, or momentary, lack of motivation. In this situation, we should reinstate our resolve, thinking, "Until the special state of samadhi has fully dawned within my stream of being, I will not give up Dharma practice or let my diligence and exertion slacken!" In this way, we should continue our training without wavering.

Chapters 31 & 32

The next two chapters are the thirty-first and thirty-second of the *King of Samadhi Sutra*. The first is called "The Benefits" and the second "Defining the Nature of All Things." These chapters are similar to subjects already covered in other chapters, regarding the benefits and the positive outcome of training in samadhi. The thirty-first chapter focuses on the temporary benefits and the thirty-second on the ultimate benefits, the supreme accomplishment. There is also a detailed description of the defects of not embracing the state of samadhi. These two chapters are quite similar in that they both depict the advantages of training in samadhi.

Chapter 33

The thirty-third chapter is called "The Benefits of Retaining the Sutra." Since training in the sublime state of samadhi is most precious and crucial, where do we find the teachings on how to proceed in developing our understanding of the state of samadhi, when it has not yet arisen within our experience? Even if it has been experienced, how can we overcome hindrances and enhance our stability in the state of samadhi? If we do not feel very diligent, how can we overcome this failing and exert ourselves further in the training? How can we achieve the ultimate fruition and its enlightened qualities? When our faith and devotion weaken, how can we support and bolster it? All these teachings are described very clearly by the fully Awakened One, the Buddha, in the sutras. Moreover, the commentaries composed by learned and accomplished masters of both India and Tibet elucidate the intent of the Buddha's Words. All these teachings included within the Sutra system are extremely precious.

In this context the Buddha explains that it is very important to listen to teachings on the Sutra system, to memorize their significance, to contemplate and retain their meaning, chant them aloud and try to fully understand them. Once we have completely comprehended their intent, we should thoroughly expound their content to others. This not only brings great benefit in our own progress in samadhi training, but benefits other people in their practice as well. We should apply ourselves to all these aspects, not dwelling only on the words but experiencing their meaning as well. This concludes the chapter on the benefits of retaining the sutras.

I just want to mention that in this context, whether we are taught by the perfectly enlightened one personally or whether studying a treatise by one of the great masters, we should polish our understanding of what we learn. After we acquire a complete and unmistaken comprehension of a particular teaching, the Buddha says that we should polish it further. What does it mean to polish it? It means that we should penetrate to its essential meaning.

The essential meaning within this chapter is the so-called 'five unconditioned aggregates,' which are the direct opposites of the five mundane conditioned aggregates of physical forms, sensations, conceptions, formations, and consciousnesses. The five unconditioned aggregates should be understood regardless of whether we are studying the direct words of the Buddha or the commentaries written by the learned and accomplished masters of India and Tibet.

The first of the 'five unconditioned aggregates' is the unconditioned aggregate of discipline, meaning the completely pure conduct of carrying out utterly pure deeds of body, speech, and mind, free from the defilements of disturbing emotions and negative actions. This is the basis upon which the other four unconditioned aggregates rest.

After perfecting pure discipline, the second aggregate of unconditioned samadhi is then possible. Unconditioned samadhi at this point refers to a pure meditation state, regardless of whether it is practiced in terms of shamatha, vipashyana or their unity. Our samadhi concentration should be carried out in a totally pure way. Having perfectly abandoned all desire, anger, dullness, envy, and pride, we abide having overcome all painful states.

When possessing the aggregate of unconditioned concentration, called 'samadhi,' in this context, it is accompanied by the unconditioned aggregate of discriminating knowledge. 'Pure discrimination' means seeing directly and nakedly the unconditioned state of dharmata, or the true nature of all things. In short, we perceive ultimate truth. This is called 'the wisdom that perceives the nature as it is.' When the direct seeing of the nature of things as it is occurs, the knowledge that perceives the relative conditioned phenomena, whatever exists, automatically and simultaneously takes place. This is the second aspect of the two types of wisdom included within the 'unconditioned aggregate of discriminating knowledge' that sees the actual condition of both the conditioned relative state and unconditioned ultimate state exactly as they are.

When these two, the unconditioned aggregate of concentration and the unconditioned aggregate of discriminating knowledge, are present, there is total liberation. This means that the defects of disturbing emotions and the two obscurations present within our stream of being are automatically purified. If we do not possess these two unconditioned aggregates of concentration and discriminating knowledge, we have no way of purifying what should be abandoned – ignorance and emotional obscurations – or of developing the positive qualities. Having completely eliminated the shortcomings of obscurations and disturbing emotions is called 'liberation.' Freedom from these negative characteristics is called the unconditioned aggregate of total liberation.

The fifth of the five unconditioned aggregates is called the 'unconditioned aggregate of perceiving the totally liberated state of wisdom.' This aggregate is not the result of training, nor is it achieved by means of meditation practice. It is spontaneously, originally present as the true, ultimate nature of things. By simply removing the obscurations and

veils through concentration and discriminating knowledge, this original nature is revealed. This is called 'seeing the utterly free, totally liberated state of wisdom.'

These five unconditioned aggregates are taught to be the direct remedies which counteract the five conditioned or defiled aggregates of samsaric existence, namely physical forms, sensations, conceptions, formations, and consciousnesses.

At the outset, we should understand the significance of the five unconditioned aggregates. The *King of Samadhi Sutra* explains things from their ultimate standpoint. Discipline is seen to be devoid of any concrete entity, originally pure and utterly empty; therefore, we should possess pure discipline. Since such discipline is empty of concrete existence, we should not hold it to be paramount. Of course, being gentle and disciplined is superior to its opposite, but when maintaining pure discipline and conduct, if we consider ourselves superior to others and hold the idea that we are very pure and disciplined, this becomes a severe fault. The sutra says, 'Keep disciplined, but without the notion of discipline being paramount.'

In addition to this, we should also possess the unconditioned aggregate of concentration, or samadhi. Again, we should do so without being pretentious, without dwelling on the idea that we possess qualities superior to other beings.

Thirdly, we should unwaveringly possess the unconditioned aggregate of discriminating knowledge. 'Unwavering discriminating knowledge' means without holding the notion that discriminating knowledge in itself possesses a nature that is in any way concrete or independent. It is utterly, primordially, and naturally empty.

The fourth of the four unconditioned aggregates is the aggregate of total liberation. While we should achieve this, do not think that this achievement has created something that was not already present. It is the true ultimate nature of things, utter purity. It is said that one should 'see it as being fully remote.' 'Remote' means 'far from any ordinary characteristics,' but utterly free. Understand that this freedom is not some new and unprecedented achievement, but has the nature of original freedom.

The fifth unconditioned aggregate, the unconditioned aggregate of 'seeing the utterly liberated wisdom,' is the principle of seeing the originally liberated state directly and exactly as it is. Again, this is not perceived as something that was not already present, something that has been improved upon or is a new achievement. It is more in the sense of realizing the ultimate, true nature of things exactly as it is. This state of freedom is originally and naturally devoid of disturbing emotions, the defilement to

be abandoned. Seeing that this is naturally so, is itself the state of Mahamudra.

These five unconditioned aggregates are attained through fully retaining this sutra. We do not approach this attainment in terms of their relative level, or the expedient meaning, but in terms of the ultimate or definitive meaning. This is clearly expressed in the sutras, and regarding the training in Mahamudra is connected to seeing the nature of things as it is. We turn away from the five defiled aggregates of samsaric existence and realize the five unconditioned aggregates. This concludes the thirty-third chapter on the benefits of retaining the sutras.

Chapter 34

The thirty-fourth chapter, called "Blessed with Well-Being," has a story about one of the Buddha's past lives in which the great value and necessity of making offerings, both to the actual form of the buddhas as well as to the stupas containing their relics, is explained. Through this, we will achieve a tremendous gathering of the accumulation of merit and, based on this accumulation, we will be able to progress in the realization of the true state of samadhi. The main purpose is of course to realize the nature of things, and in order to do so, the accumulation of merit with concepts is extremely important to facilitate the samadhi beyond concepts.

The story involves a Buddha named 'Blessed with Melodiousness.' Shortly after the Buddha passed away, a king called 'Melodious Splendor' built stupas and made immense offerings to his remains. At that time, a young bodhisattva named 'Blessed with Well-being' formed the resolve to attain supreme enlightenment. He offered one of his own hands as a lamp to the stupa. Now, we should not think that we literally have to sacrifice parts of our body in order to make offerings. Instead, from this example we should understand the value of making offerings to a stupa. Such actions promote both devotion and faith. Based on this devotion, faith and diligence, it is possible to realize and progress in the state of samadhi and thus bring great benefit to oneself and other beings.

There is immeasurable benefit from erecting, making offerings to and circumambulating images of the buddha and stupas, both for other people and for oneself. These deeds plant virtuous roots, then help them to develop and grow. When novice students of Buddhism arrive in a place like Nepal and watch people circling around the Great Stupa in Boudhanath, it appears as though the people circumambulating are not gaining anything. They walk and walk and then what happens? They merely arrive

back in the same spot. They again walk around and again arrive at their starting point. It seems as though there is not much benefit in just circling a sacred object. But making offerings to and circumambulating sacred objects brings great benefit for both ourselves and others.

One benefit is that it secures the existence of Buddhism from one generation to the next. Hundreds of years ago, great learned and accomplished masters appeared in Nepal, such as Dignaga, Atisha and so forth. Since they passed away, it does not seem as though many accomplished masters have emerged, but still, for some reason or another, Buddhism has not disappeared from this land. It has not degenerated or vanished because each generation of people have kept alive the feeling of being Buddhist, paying homage to the buddhas by making offerings and circumambulating the stupas. When a certain number of people walk around a sacred object, the next generation follows this pattern and the custom is somehow perpetuated. Even though learned or accomplished masters may not have appeared, Buddhism has not just faded away. That the Dharma has remained is one benefit for others.

The benefit for ourselves is that the moment we show respect and remember the virtues of enlightenment, devotion arises, allowing for the genuine authentic state of samadhi to take birth in our being. At the very least, a resemblance of genuine samadhi can occur, after which we enter the path to the final fruition of enlightenment.

Chapter 35

The thirty-fifth chapter, entitled "Endowed with Wisdom," emphasizes the act of dedication. Just as the previous chapter described the great value of making offerings and circumambulating in order to gather an immense accumulation of merit, this chapter describes the tremendous value of dedication. Once we create virtuous karma we should dedicate it to other beings. Four types of dedication are mentioned.

The first type of dedication is to share our wealth and enjoyment by being generous, and by dedicating these acts of generosity towards the benefit of others. We should make the aspiration that by doing so may it create the roots of virtue. The second type of dedication is to dedicate the roots of virtue towards the benefit of others even before engaging in any virtuous activity.

The next type of dedication is to dedicate future results of virtuous roots, thinking, "May the virtue I create in the future result in even greater merit and splendor which I will also dedicate and share with all beings."

This third type is still somewhat temporary. The fourth way is the ultimate dedication, thinking, "Whatever root of virtue I create, I dedicate to attaining the state of complete and perfect enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings."

At an earlier point in our talks, it was mentioned that we may harbor some fear or expectation when dedicating the merit. For example, if one of our friends or relatives is sick or in trouble, we may have the hope that by doing something virtuous we can somehow transfer that goodness to the other person so that he or she can immediately be freed from obstacles, be cured of sickness or not die. But such a feat is not easy to achieve. We should not harbor such expectations.

Or, we may give rise to fear, thinking, "I took the trouble to create this merit. If I dedicate it to someone else, I'll lose it and it won't be there for me any more." But it's not like this either. It may seem like a contradiction to dedicate merit when each person in samsara enjoys or suffers the results of only his or her own negative or positive actions, but no conflict really exists. Just as the results of the virtuous or evil deeds we create cannot be transferred to another person, neither can we take away someone else's negative karma or take our own virtue and transfer it to another person. Therefore, when dedicating the merit, we need not entertain any hope or fear whatsoever.

Then, we might think if the virtue is not transferable what is the point of dedicating merit? Is it pointless? No, it is not. There is a strong need for and a great purpose in dedicating merit. The reason is that whenever we carry out a deed, we usually hold strong attachment to the fruit of our own labor, thinking that the result somehow belongs to us for our own enjoyment. There is some inherent miserliness attached to the effect of the deeds we engage in. In order to relinquish that selfishness and to abandon the rigid attachment to the notions of self and others, it is important to train ourselves in sharing and dedicating the positive outcome of whatever we do with all other sentient beings, rather than just continuing on with our selfish attitude. This will greatly reduce the attachment and fixation we have on things as being solid and real, as well as diminish our selfishness and ego-clinging. Growing used to the attitude of acting for others, we weaken the attachment to personal gain, and our minds become more courageous, gentle, and easy. Through this we make much swifter progress on the path, realizing samadhi and increasing its stability. Dedicating merit definitely has incredibly great purpose and advantages.

We may think, "If dedicating the merit benefits myself in the sense of increasing and progressing in the state of samadhi, then it's still a little selfish. Maybe this doesn't benefit others." But this is also not true. On the contrary, by dedicating the merit we train in being more altruistic in our attitude, focusing away from selfish aims. Such mental patterns facilitate further progress in the state of samadhi. By training in this way we will at some point truly accomplish the qualities of enlightenment such as miraculous powers, superknowledges, wisdom, compassion, and the capacity to benefit other beings. Since all the virtuous roots are dedicated towards the complete and perfect state of enlightenment, the activity stemming from that will be exclusively for the welfare of others. Even while we are still on the path developing enlightened qualities, we are truly able to teach others, to guide, to solve their problems, promote and uphold the Dharma teachings, and thus bring them immense benefit. In this way, dedicating the merit of our deeds, the roots of virtue, will truly help others.

Another point: whether we practice the general system of Buddhism, or whether we engage in the extraordinary practices of Secret Mantra, Vajrayana; whether we pursue the essence mantra of our yidam deity, or whether we especially train in the samadhi of Mahamudra or the Great Perfection; or whether we just try our best to create some merit, even with ordinary concepts – whatever we practice, it is always essential to embrace our practice with the 'three excellences.'

The first excellence is the 'excellent preparation of bodhichitta.' This attitude of awakened mind includes both taking refuge and forming the resolve to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all beings. We do this chiefly by thinking, "I am practicing the Dharma for the welfare of all sentient beings!"

The second of these three is called the 'excellent main part beyond concepts.' Whatever practice we engage in, be it yidam practice or the state of samadhi with or without focus, any virtuous thought, word or deed, pursuit of studies and reflection should be carried out while embracing it with the view of emptiness. We should do so without any attachment to the practice as being solid or real, but by 'sealing' the action with the view of emptiness.

Finally, the third aspect is the 'excellent conclusion of dedication.' This includes dedicating the roots of virtue of reciting a mantra or training in samadhi, sharing the merit with all beings and making pure aspirations. These 'three excellences' are at all times extremely important.

We will stop here. You can ask questions now.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

STUDENT: Rinpoche, when teaching about *tong-len*, you said in the past that although at this stage, *tong-len* only benefits ourselves because it trains us in greater virtue, at some point *tong-len* would actually begin to benefit others. You gave the example of a monk who touched someone's wound and the wound healed due to his great kindness. Is dedication of merit the same kind of thing? The description of dedication of merit you gave is for those of us who are still quite new to this practice, but as we mature will we be able to actually benefit other beings directly through the dedication of merit? If this is so, how does that work?

RINPOCHE: Indirectly, others are definitely benefited by dedicating the merit. The attitude of dedicating the merit promotes nonconceptual, impartial great compassion. Through increasing and progressing in nonconceptual, impartial great compassion, our practice evolves into a way that is boundless and inconceivable, making it possible for the activity and enlightened qualities to benefit others. However, directly benefiting them by means of dedicating merit means we should be able to transfer something positive into their stream of being where that positive quality did not previously exist. This is impossible; it doesn't happen. Since the fully and perfectly Enlightened One, Buddha Shakyamuni, perceives right now with his immense compassion whatever exists, including all of us, it might appear that he should be able to give us all his qualities. But it doesn't seem as though he is transferring his enlightened qualities into our being – sorry to tell you that (Rinpoche laughs).

STUDENT: This is a follow-up along the same line, because the stories that go along with *lojong* – how the accomplished yogi is suddenly covered with bruises when someone throws a stone at a dog – seem to indicate it *is* possible to take on the result or fruition of another's negative karma.

RINPOCHE: The yogi who manifested a bruise when the dog was hit by a stone was displaying a sign of great compassion due to the unbearable feeling of seeing another sentient being suffering. It was not that the dog's suffering was physically taken on by the yogi. Suffering does not exist in such a way. Otherwise, since it is a much greater suffering for the dog to just be a dog, why didn't the yogi just take the dog's physical form onto himself and make the dog into a human being? (Laughter) That would have been much kinder, right? But it's not possible to do things like that.

STUDENT: Often in the Buddhist teachings, there is an example used for mirror-like wisdom in which pure perception is described as something that just reflects objects clearly, but without any attachment. I find this

example very difficult to understand because if there is an object that is reflected in a mirror – we look at this example from the standpoint of someone who is distant from the mirror – for the object to appear, the mind must have some kind of subtle attachment to the idea of 'object' and 'subject.' Can Rinpoche explain this example of something that can appear purely to the mind, but completely without attachment?

RINPOCHE: Mirror-like wisdom is not exactly as you have described. I will try to clarify it. Generally, we speak of the five wisdoms, the principal one being the wisdom of dharmadhatu. 'Dharmadhatu' means the nature of all things, emptiness itself, phenomena's absence of a true existence. Clearly seeing the nature of things exactly as it is means 'seeing no thing' whatsoever. Not beholding any entity whatsoever is what the wisdom of dharmadhatu is. Does this mean that the awakened state of enlightenment does not see anything at all? No, it doesn't mean that either. Dharmadhatu wisdom means to clearly perceive the true nature of things, the ultimate truth, which is the emptiness of all phenomena, but at the same time there is also what we call mirror-like wisdom.

Just as when reflections appear in a mirror, such as the reflection of a mountain, the reflection has no concrete existence. It is not really a mountain inside the mirror. What appears is not that thing itself, no matter whether it is a reflection of a house, a man, a vase or a pillar. And yet, the reflection does not take place separate from its empty nature. In the same way, the dharmadhatu wisdom of the fully awakened state of a buddha, while realizing the empty nature of things, can at the same time also see the relative appearances, just like reflections appearing in a mirror. That is why the awakened state is said to be endowed with mirror-like wisdom.

This quality of mirror-like wisdom allows whatever is to freely take place, vividly and distinctly. Yet emptiness is not identical with a physical mirror, which is just dead matter. Why? Because at the same time, there is what is called 'discriminating wisdom,' seeing everything distinctly and individually. When the reflections of sentient beings appear in the 'mirror' – the pain of one, the pleasure of another, the suffering that needs to be alleviated, the happiness that needs to be established, and so forth – all this is perceived; when a sentient being is pleased or suffers, the different states are clearly and distinctly perceived without mistake. Nothing is blurred together.

The Buddha is not like an unskilled doctor who does not know which medicine is necessary to cure a particular disease. Such a physician mixes everything up and does not make the proper distinctions, so that someone suffering a bile disorder is given medicine to counteract a phlegm disor-

der. The Buddha does not act like that. According to the principle of discriminating wisdom, everything is clearly and distinctly seen so that teachings are given as a direct antidote to the appropriate trouble.

STUDENT: But does this distinction of one thing from another, as in the case of discriminating wisdom, possess some subtle attachment?

RINPOCHE: What do you mean by 'attachment' in this case? Do you mean simply knowing the difference or do you mean being attached to knowing the difference?

STUDENT: Knowing the difference means perceiving something as 'there' and as something 'other.'

RINPOCHE: There is definitely a distinct perception of what is and is not as being different. Definitely. That is why it is called discriminating wisdom, literally 'wakefulness that understands things distinctly and individually.' Such wakefulness perceives very clearly but that does not conflict with seeing emptiness, because the very identity of this discriminating wisdom is dharmadhatu wisdom. There is no real attachment to that in the normal sense of believing that what is experienced is in any way real or solid. Likewise, the very identity of mirror-like wisdom is also the wisdom of dharmadhatu. While perceiving emptiness, the ultimate truth or nature of all phenomena, at the same time there is the experience of what sentient beings perceive very clearly and distinctly, but without any attachment whatsoever.

Here's an example I often use. It can be expanded slightly here. Two people are lying next to each other sleeping. One is having a nightmare that a tiger is about to eat him. The other person is sleeping peacefully, having a pleasant, happy dream. A third person, who is clairvoyant, can see these experiences taking place in the other people's minds. He sees that one person is having a terrifying nightmare where a tiger is chasing him, but in his own experience, the clairvoyant person is not being chased by a tiger but just perceiving someone else's dream. Therefore, in his own experience, there is no fear or concept of any real tiger. In the same way, a fully enlightened buddha perceives the suffering and deluded experiences of all sentient beings. But that does not mean that the buddha is thereby deluded or suffers. Yet, at the same time, he will wish to help the person who suffers. Even though the other person is just dreaming, the clairvoyant person will feel like stretching out a hand and waking him up so he can discover there is no real tiger and no real basis for fear. On the other hand, there is not any real need to awaken the person who is having a pleasant, happy dream. The clairvoyant person does not believe in any real, truly existent tiger and is therefore unafraid. He is also not attached

to the happiness enjoyed by the other person in a peaceful sleep. At the same time, he does not err regarding who is dreaming what. Even though he himself is not dreaming, he does not make any mistake about who should be awakened and who should be left alone. That is what is called discriminating wisdom which perceives distinctly and in an unmixed, unblurred way.

STUDENT: A reference was made to the fact that solid reality is an illusion. I wonder if this refers to the absence of hardness of substance, or if that is an incorrect understanding of the word 'solid'?

RINPOCHE: The words 'real' or 'concrete' mean that things are what they seem to be, not just something superficial or a mere presence, but what we believe them to be is 'really' what they are. It is attachment.

STUDENT: So, are the conceptual aggregates of smell, sound, sight and so forth all deceiving us?

TRANSLATOR: You didn't really say that 'they' deceive 'us'?

STUDENT: As well as perceiving emptiness, do buddhas still see the difference between objects? Are perceptual differences such as between different colors or different sounds, or are there actually no differences and we are mistaken in considering them to be different?

RINPOCHE: This is why a distinction is made between the two levels of truth, relative and ultimate. 'Relative truth' means what is superficially or seemingly true in our experience. It is not called a lie or falsehood because it is true – that's how it is experienced to be. Whatever we experience superficially is like that and is therefore called 'relatively true.' But in terms of what is ultimately or really true, any superficial experience of relative truth is totally mistaken, always deluded. Ultimately, things do not really exist in the way they are superficially perceived. Ultimately, things are devoid of any independent entity or true nature. Take the example of a dream of whatever – a house, a place, mountains, walls. Does the dreamer experience these things? Yes he does; it is true for him. For instance, say a tiger is chasing us in a dream. It is undeniably experienced as though there really were a tiger chasing us. Relatively or superficially speaking, this is true, isn't it? But does the tiger or whatever else may appear in a dream really exist as it is superficially experienced? No, it does not. It is not really true. Ultimately, there is no truth in superficial truth. That is the difference between the two and that is why there are two levels of truth.

STUDENT: But when you wake up from a dream, you no longer experience the environment of that dream. When you wake up from delusion, do you still have this environment?

RINPOCHE: When awakening to perfect enlightenment, this present environment as deluded perception does not exist in our own experience – not at all – but still there is the clear seeing of what is experienced by others, their deluded perceptions. But it does not exist for ourselves. We only see the true nature of things. (Rinpoche makes a face; everybody laughs).

ENTERING THE GREAT COMPASSION

Then venerable Ananda rose from his seat, bared his shoulder, knelt on his right knee, joined his palms respectfully towards the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror, and said: "If the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror would grant me the opportunity, I wish to ask a few questions of the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror, the tathagata arhat samyak-sambuddha. ..."

"Transcendent Perfect Conqueror, what are the causes and conditions through which a bodhisattva mahabodhisattva, during the boundless actions of a bodhisattva, doesn't turn back from unexcelled true and complete enlightenment, even while his hands, or his feet are cut off, his ears or his nose are cut off, his eyes are pulled out, his head is cut off or his body cut asunder, or his limbs are severed, and he undergoes all kinds of pains?"

CHAPTER 36

The thirty-sixth chapter of the *King of Samadhi Sutra* is called "Lovely Moonflower." This is the name of one of the past incarnations of Bodhisattva Youthful Moonlight. During this past life, Lovely Moonflower engaged in the vast, immense actions of a bodhisattva. In the sutra, the Buddha predicted how this same bodhisattva in a future life would be born under the name Dawö Shönnu, Youthful Moonlight, – which was also one of Gampopa's names – and would spread the flawless teachings on samadhi, thus benefiting innumerable followers. In his teachings on Mahamudra, Gampopa himself discloses that in a former life he was the

one who requested the *King of Samadhi Sutra* from Buddha Shakyamuni. This is the chapter that narrates how Gampopa formed the bodhichitta resolve for the very first time.

This chapter on the bodhisattva Lovely Moonflower is initiated by a question from Ananda, one of the Buddha's close disciples. He asks, "Why does a bodhisattva undergo great hardship in order to carry out the vast actions of a bodhisattva? Even when he suffers from having his hands, legs, ears or nose cut off, how is he able to not stray away from his vow of bodhichitta nor weaken his resolve to attain complete enlightenment? How is a bodhisattva able to suffer so much and not stray from or degenerate the bodhisattva vow?" The Buddha replied, "You already know the answer very well. You also know how in my past lives I underwent numerous trials and hardships and yet never damaged or degenerated the vow of a bodhisattva."

The Buddha then gave an example, saying, "If someone's body has caught fire and he undergoes severe pain, how will he react to being told he should enjoy the five sense pleasures, such as beautiful forms, sweet-sounding music, and lovely fragrances. Such a person will not be able to enjoy these sense pleasures in any way whatsoever. In the same way, although a bodhisattva undertaking the vast conduct of the path to enlightenment encounters various difficulties such as obstacles, pain and all kinds of suffering, he or she perceives how all other sentient beings suffer from being miserable in the six realms. He or she will, therefore, not dwell on his or her own individual pain and suffering. In this way, the bodhichitta vow and the bodhisattva precepts are not damaged or degenerated."

To illustrate this, the Buddha tells a story from a past aeon in which a buddha named Utterly Pure Precious Lotus Moon appeared in the world and extensively turned the Wheel of the sacred Dharma. After having done so, he passed away. Long after, when his teachings were about to vanish, there lived a great king, named Blessed with Bravery, who possessed immense might, wealth and splendor and an incredible abundance of enjoyments. During his reign, the Buddhadharma was on the verge of vanishing completely because very few truly engaged in keeping the monastic vows, expounding the Dharma and training in samadhi meditation. Instead, most 'practitioners' were quite attached to honor and gain. Yet, there was one teacher named Lovely Moonlight, who propagated and proclaimed the pure and correct state of samadhi. He had a few followers who practiced the teachings correctly in keeping the monastic discipline and training in samadhi meditation. Other so-called followers of the

Buddhadharma, who were pursuing nothing other than personal fame and gain, began to create obstacles.

At this time, the bodhisattva Lovely Moonlight remained with his disciples, practicing and teaching meditation in an utterly secluded forest. Due to his blessings, the forest was extremely beautiful, very peaceful and quiet with lovely scenery. Everything was quite wonderful. His retinue practiced the teachings very diligently. One day, the bodhisattva thought to himself, "We have very nice conditions for ourselves while listening, propagating and practicing the teachings. But these precious teachings should bring great benefit to numerous beings, not just to a few in this secluded spot. We should go to the city and villages, and even to the king's palace, and propagate the precious Dharma so it can benefit others as well." He declared this to his retinue, but they tried to dissuade him saying, "That's not really a good idea. It will only invite obstacles and difficulties." But the bodhisattva replied, "We should not merely keep in mind the goal of our own personal comfort, but, instead, regardless of difficulties and obstacles, be willing to undertake such problems in order to bring benefit and welfare to other beings. Otherwise, we are unable to truly embrace the conduct of a bodhisattva. I will now go to teach the conduct of a bodhisattva!"

Having made this resolve, the bodhisattva Lovely Moonlight set out for the villages, the city and finally the king's palace. For six consecutive days he proclaimed the sacred Dharma and brought benefit to innumerable beings. In particular, he taught them the state of samadhi and how to train in meditation. Each night he would dwell at the stupa containing the relics of the past Buddha, and on the following day he would again give teachings. Without breaking for meals, he undertook incredible hardship to propagate the Dharma, benefiting an untold number of beings.

On the seventh day, the bodhisattva gave teachings in the palace's garden. King Blessed with Bravery descended from his lion-throne and was carried around on a tour of his gardens. During this time, he saw that his queens, his sons, his ministers and officers were all paying homage to someone who was teaching there. They were bowing down and making offerings. He became very jealous, thinking, "How terrible! This person wants to usurp my throne. My queens and the princes are bowing to him and listening to what he is saying." He called the princes over and said, "Kill that man!" His sons refused this order. Now the king was overwhelmed with fear, thinking, "This is incredibly dangerous! My own sons are no longer listening to me. I have no power anymore. What should I do?"

The king tried to find someone who would obey his command. He finally found a vicious and fierce executioner who loved to kill. The king thought, "This person will definitely listen to what I say." The king told him, "Kill that Dharma teacher!" The executioner was very happy to carry our this command. He went to the bodhisattva Lovely Moonlight and chopped off his arms, legs and head, killing him.

For some reason, the king was not made happy by the slaying of Lovely Moonlight. For seven days after, he felt very depressed. He took a walk in his gardens and came to the chopped- up corpse of the bodhisattva Lovely Moonlight. Surprisingly, the remains had not decomposed. They were fresh and radiant and possessed great beauty. The king felt very strong guilt and gave rise to deep remorse. He offered many deep-felt apologies and tried to purify the evil he had done by arranging a proper cremation for the bodhisattva on a pyre of sandalwood. He erected a beautiful stupa for the remains. Because of this, the king, his queens, sons, ministers and countless subjects in that country developed total renunciation for mundane existence and great faith and devotion towards practicing samadhi and gaining liberation. Thus, even the bodhisattva's death had a tremendous impact.

In this way, the story illustrates how a bodhisattva does not consider his own safety. Seeing that there will be great benefit for others, he will even sacrifice his or her own life.

CHAPTER 37

The thirty-seventh chapter is entitled "Defining the Aggregate of Discipline," and covers the benefits of maintaining discipline and proper behavior. This topic was covered earlier when explaining the benefits of the six paramitas of generosity, patience, discipline and so on. However, since this is a sutra, and in the sutras the explanations take various forms and modes in order to influence people of many different kinds of dispositions and inclinations, the benefits of keeping discipline are once again expounded. The meaning expressed does not differ from what was expressed earlier.

CHAPTER 38

The thirty-eighth chapter, entitled "Pleasant Light," describes the motivation with which we, either as someone desiring to understand and practice the teachings ourselves or as someone proclaiming and propagating the Buddhadharma to others, must necessarily exert ourselves diligently. The most important aspect in both cases is our own motivation.

KING OF SAMADHI

Proper motivation should be of three types. The bodhisattva who practices or teaches the Dharma should have a pure motivation that primarily aims at fully and utterly eradicating whatever prevents progress and realization within his own stream of being. The biggest obstacle to realization is the obscuration of disturbing emotions. First of all, we should motivate ourselves to remove and utterly purify the disturbing emotions in our own stream of being.

The second motivation to engender is the wish to become a pure field of merit, aiming at finally and perfectly arriving at complete enlightenment. The result of practice should manifest in a way that becomes an object of faith and devotion for others, a person from whom they can request pure teachings. We should become a conduit by which other beings can develop great merit and progress in their own practice. To word it differently, the state of enlightenment becomes a field of merit for other beings. This is also a correct motivation for practicing the sacred Dharma and for training in samadhi. Try to motivate yourself in that way.

The third motivation should be the desire or yearning toward the wisdom of the Awakened Ones, the wisdom of seeing the nature of things as it is, as well as the wisdom that perceives all that is. Having achieved this perfect twofold wisdom of all the awakened buddhas, we use this to unerringly declare the unmistaken and complete path of enlightenment to other beings out of great compassion.

CHAPTER 39

The thirty-ninth and final chapter of the *King of Samadhi Sutra* describes the precepts of body, speech and mind. The sutra itself, structures this description of the precepts of body, speech and mind as a single chapter. The commentary on this sutra, however, treats these three aspects as three individual chapters which become the thirty-ninth, fortieth and forty-first chapters. In terms of meaning, whether they are treated as one or three chapters, there is no difference whatsoever.

The first of the three, the precepts of body, refers to the vows of physical conduct. To keep pure conduct in our physical actions is extremely important and very beneficial and thus should not be ignored or belittled. Here, the Buddha teaches that by observing the precepts of body, the result will be the subsequent achievement of the perfect form of a buddha, adorned

with the 32 major and 80 minor marks of excellence. In terms of the qualities of the dharmakaya of the fully awakened state, the pure observance of the precepts of body will definitely result in the achievement of inconceivable virtues such as the fourfold fearlessness, the ten strengths, the eighteen unique qualities and so forth. This is why the Buddha repeatedly taught that we should try our best to keep pure conduct by observing the precepts for physical actions.

Among all the details of body precepts, the principal ones are to abandon the three negative actions of killing, taking what is not given, and engaging in sexual misconduct. Therefore, any action carried out by a state of mind motivated by the disturbing emotions of desire, anger or stupidity is always negative and should be avoided. However, the question arises, "Is an action that appears to be negative to be avoided in all cases?" No, it is not. There are some circumstances in which a negative action of body, when carried out intelligently, for the sake of others and without any selfishness whatsoever, directly benefits other beings. It is then not called a negative action and actually can be a positive action. In some cases there may even be greater benefit from taking a life than from avoiding killing, and in that case we should not abandon it simply because it is a so-called evil deed.

A story from a past life of the Buddha illustrates this. He was born as Prince Fortitude, who captained a ship. In those days, India was very wealthy and had a great abundance of riches. One of the sources of this abundance was the islands in the ocean just beyond the mainland of India. These islands were laden with many precious jewels that were lying around waiting to simply be picked up. Journeying to these islands was replete with the great danger of storms and other hazards that could easily cause shipwreck and loss of life. Travelers risked never returning, but if one could survive the journey, one could return extremely wealthy.

Aboard the ship captained by Prince Fortitude were 500 merchants who all wanted to collect great treasure and return safely to the mainland. Among these, was a murderer named Spear-wielding Criminal who intended to kill off everyone aboard the ship and take their goods for himself. The bodhisattva Prince Fortitude knew about this intention and thought, "If this person gets away with it, he will reap the karma of killing 500 people. But if I kill him first, I can save him from this negative karma." So, the bodhisattva shot and killed the criminal with an arrow. Instead of creating negative karma from this act, he accumulated a vast amount of merit. This illustrates that, embraced by discriminating knowledge and pure motivation, such a negative action can still become virtuous.

Just as taking a life can sometimes be to the benefit of others, the other two negative actions of body can be as well. If our motivation is utterly free from disturbing emotions, the action can be carried out if it relieves the suffering of others or brings benefit to a vast number of beings. The same goes for the four negative actions of speech: lying, slandering, uttering harsh words and engaging in idle gossip. All of these should be abandoned when motivated by disturbing emotions, but these can also benefit others if engaged in with a pure and unselfish motivation. Yet, pure motivation should be combined with intelligence. This is why the major treatises always mention that, in certain circumstances, carrying out the four negative actions of speech can be permissible and should not categorically be avoided.

Nevertheless, when it comes to the three negative actions of mind, which are the three basic negative emotions of desire, anger and stupidity – or among the ten nonvirtues, covetousness, ill-will and wrong views – there is never any situation in which these can be virtuous. Thus, at all times, they should be avoided.

Having described the precepts of body, speech and mind, the Buddha then gives 300 instructions. Many are given because it is the Sutra style to use extensive details. According to some pith instructions, we should regard the aggregates as being like a mirage, the sense-bases as being like magical illusions and so forth. All 300 categories are primarily teachings on emptiness.

Conclusion

When the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror expounded these Dharma teachings defining the samadhi that fully reveals the equal nature of all things, a countless number of sentient beings formed the resolve to attain unexcelled true and complete enlightenment, and a countless number of sentient beings attained non-regression from the state of unexcelled true and complete enlightenment ...

[The Buddha said:] "The sentient beings who will hear these Dharma teachings on entering great compassion will achieve excellence. After hearing this samadhi that fully reveals the equal nature of all things, whoever writes it down, memorizes, retains, and reads it, comprehends, and practices it through non-emotional training, does so repeatedly, and, as well, teaches it widely to others, will become the object of giving of all sentient beings."

Then the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror said to venerable Ananda: "Ananda, retain these Dharma teachings! Read them! Comprehend them! Explain them widely, fully and thoroughly to others!"

Venerable Ananda then asked the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror: "Transcendent Perfect Conqueror, what should the name of these Dharma teachings be? How should they be retained?"

The Transcendent Perfect Conqueror replied: "Ananda, retain this sutra under the name Entering the Great Compassion, and under the name The Samadhi that Fully Reveals the Equal Nature of All Things."

Ananda said: "Transcendent Perfect Conqueror, I have retained these Dharma teachings."

When the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror had finished speaking, Youthful Moonlight, venerable Ananda, the four retinues of monks and nuns, male and female lay people, the innumerable gods from the Pure Abodes, as well as the gods, humans and gandharvas in this world, rejoiced and praised the words of the Transcendent Perfect Conqueror.

This completes the teachings on the *King of Samadhi Sutra* in 39 or 41 chapters. I would like to conclude with an apology. Because the sutra is so subtle, profound, and extensive, I have been unable to cover all the topics in their exact detail. Instead I selected the major themes and the most important meanings and spent time explaining them.

I thank all of you for attending and listening joyfully and with appreciation to the teachings on the *King of Samadhi Sutra*. Thank you very much.

Song of Lodrö Thaye

Within Nonconcept, Wisdom Dawned

The *Song of Lodrö Thaye* was composed by Lodrö Thaye, Jamgön Kongtrül the Great, and expresses his realization of Mahamudra. It is contained in the collection of songs called the "Ocean of Songs of the Kagyüs," known in English as *Rain of Wisdom*.

Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye was foretold by Buddha Shakyamuni in the *King of Samadhi Sutra*. When I taught this sutra, I mentioned that Gampopa was predicted but I did not say much about Jamgön Kongtrül. In the sutra the Buddha is recorded as saying, "In the future, when the time of degeneration has begun, there will be a great bodhisattva named Lodrö who will vastly benefit beings by means of the five types of knowledge." In fact, Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye established the body of the Buddha's teachings, which he collected and composed, within five treasuries. In this way, he delayed the disappearance of the Buddhadharma. When he realized the view of Mahamudra, he spontaneously wrote down this song.

Traditionally, when writing a composition one first explains the reason and purpose for doing so. Jamgön Kongtrül elaborately describes this in this song. Then he divides the topic of Mahamudra into three parts: ground Mahamudra, path Mahamudra and fruition Mahamudra.

The first section is a detailed exposition of the reason for composing the song. Jamgön Kongtrül mentions the special fortune of having met his root-guru, Nyinchey Wangpo, a very extraordinary person and one of the incarnations in the line of Situ Rinpoches. Because of having connected with his own root guru and with the sublime masters of the lineage, experience and realization could take place within his stream of being. Furthermore, he mentions receiving the instructions which served as the catalyst for the birth of extraordinary experience and realization.

The unique qualities of his root guru are mentioned under five points. First, Jamgön Kongtrül relates his connection with his incredible master. By virtue of that connection, he was able to receive the extraordinary pith instructions. By practicing and taking them to heart, he was able to give rise to experience and realization. Everyone who follows in his footsteps should understand that it is of primary importance to first connect with a qualified master. He likens his master to Vajradhara:

> *The illustrious one, Vajradhara,*
> *Who is said to possess the eight good qualities,*

Vajradhara, regarded as sublime among the Three Jewels or Three Roots, embodies both the dharmakaya and the very heart or essence of the sambhogakaya buddhas. This 'illustrious one,' the precious, world-renowned, most extraordinary buddha, is endowed with eight qualities. These eight great qualities expressed in many sutras, treatises and tantras are the utter purity of the earth element, the utter purity of the water element, the utter purity of the fire element, the utter purity of the wind element, the utter purity of the space element, the utter purity of the element of the sun, the utter purity of the element of the moon, and the utter purity of the element of consciousness. In short, these are the eight qualities of purity.

Jamgön Kongtrül continues describing Vajradhara, saying:

> *Is seen in human form by ordinary men like us.*
> *You are the refuge called Padma, endowed with the blessings.*

Vajradhara appears as a human being to ordinary people with ordinary impure perception. Yet, in his own personal experience, Jamgön Kongtrül perceives Vajradhara to be 'Padma, Endowed with Blessings.' This refers to Padma Nyinchey Wangpo, from whom he received the pith instructions on Mahamudra which formed the basis for his experience and realization.

The Indian siddha Tilopa received teachings directly from the dharmakaya buddha Vajradhara, and, having practiced these oral instructions, gave rise to experience and realization. In the same way, Jamgön Kongtrül connected with a great master, received the pith instructions, practiced them and attained realization. With great trust, strong devotion and pure perception, he regarded his own root guru, Padma Nyinchey Wangpo, as Vajradhara in person. Likewise, we should regard our own root guru as Vajradhara in person and entrust ourselves to him with complete confi-

dence. If we do so when practicing the oral instructions, we too will be able to give rise to experience and realization.

Having met our root guru and received the pith instructions we need to supplicate from the core of our hearts in order for the blessings that engender realization to arise. Jamgön Kongtrül's song continues:

From the eight-petaled lotus dome of my heart,
I supplicated you not to be separate even for an instant.

The heart-center is sometimes called the 'jewel-octagon.' Here, it is described as an 'eight-petaled lotus dome.' Within this poetical rendition of the heart-center, likened to a tent of light, we continuously imagine our root guru without separating from him or her for even a single instant. This acts as a constant support for our prayers and supplications. The teaching for us, Jamgon Kongtrül's followers, is to proceed in exactly the same way as he did. When practicing Mahamudra, if we have connected with a qualified root guru it is extremely important to supplicate him from the core of our heart while imagining him in our own heart-center. What is the purpose of supplicating the root-guru with utmost faith and devotion? It is to receive the blessings. By receiving the blessings, we can give rise to realization.

Depending upon our own capacity realization can occur in either of two ways, gradually or instantaneously. The 'instantaneous type' is someone in whom realization and liberation occur simultaneously. Such was the case of the great king Indrabhuti who received the empowerment of *Guhyasamaja* from Lord Buddha Shakyamuni himself. Simultaneous with realizing the nature of things and the nature of his own mind, he was completely liberated from obscurations and disturbing emotions. This is an example of the instantaneous type of person who is liberated in the very same sitting as realizing the nature of mind. Liberation in this example is not through a gradual process. Jamgön Kongtrül says:

Although I did not have the good fortune of realization and
liberation at once,
I was blessed with just recognizing my own nature.

Here 'own nature' means the nature of our mind which is forever present within us. However, ordinary beings do not have the ability to realize this nature directly. Merely thinking about it, deducting and inferring by means of normal conceptual knowledge, will not enable us to realize the nature of our mind. So, how is it recognized? It is recognized by receiving

the blessings of our guru through deep-felt supplication. In that moment, it is possible to 'see' or recognize the nature of our mind.

Jamgön Kongtrül then explains what happens when we receive the blessings and recognize the nature of our mind:

Therefore, concern for the eight worldly dharmas diminished,

What are the 'eight worldly dharmas?' Worldly dharmas here means the attributes of a worldly person. When we experience pleasure, praise, material gain or fame, we feel very happy and even delighted. But when the opposite occurs, we are sad and downcast. To be involved in this is called 'being subject to the eight worldly dharmas' and it is an obstacle for spiritual practice as well as normal mundane pursuits. It is difficult to be free of these eight worldly concerns or dharmas unless we stabilize the recognition of mind nature. In the very moment of recognizing mind nature, it becomes possible to accomplish the welfare of self and others.

What is the outcome of receiving the blessings of the guru and recognizing the nature of mind? The guru's realization is transmitted so that we ourselves can experience and give birth to realization. Jamgön Kongtrül declares:

And I clearly saw the famous luminous dharmakaya
By mixing my mind with the guru's.

This luminous dharmakaya is renowned throughout all Buddhist scriptures, regardless of whether they belong to the vehicle for shravakas, the Mahayana, or Vajrayana. The ultimate and final achievement is always the realization of dharmakaya, the body of enlightened qualities. There is nothing higher than this. What differs, though, is the amount of time and energy it takes to actualize this achievement. In some instances it takes many aeons – sometimes three, seven, or thirty-seven incalculable aeons. Over these vast stretches of time the practitioner must gather a tremendous accumulation of merit, otherwise, it is said it will be impossible to realize dharmakaya. Especially in the case of a bodhisattva, it is necessary to perfect the paramita of generosity.

Within the paramita of generosity, there are three acts of giving: giving, great giving and extremely difficult giving. 'Extremely difficult giving' means giving what is very hard to part with, what is treasured most dearly – our own body and life. When in his past incarnations the Buddha was requested, he gave away his head, his eyes, the flesh of his body, and so forth without any feeling of stinginess. In this way, by giving what is extremely difficult to give away, he gathered an immense accumulation of merit.

But if we have the great fortune to meet a qualified master and receive from him the Mahamudra pith instructions, we will not have to wait innumerable aeons to realize the famous luminous dharmakaya. It can occur in this very body and lifetime, through resting in the state in which the guru's mind and our own mingle into one.

The realization that takes place when mingling our mind with the guru's and receiving the blessings is as follows:

I discovered nonthought in the midst of discursive thought,
And within nonconcept, wisdom dawned.

'Discursive thought' refers to a moment of distraction, after which we form concepts about what is occurring. Yet at the same time, the very essence or identity of this discursive thinking is nonthought, meaning nonconceptual original wakefulness. This is the state of realization of all the buddhas, the wisdom of Mahamudra. It is possible to realize this within discursive thinking. Within 'nonconcept,' meaning the absence of conceptual mind, the realization of Mahamudra, which is wisdom, dawns. This is what Jamgön Kongtrül declared. Similarly, if we supplicate our root-guru and receive the blessings, realization can occur.

As the fifth point, due to having received the pith instructions from his extraordinary master, some degree of realization took birth in Jamgön Kongtrül's being, so that he was overjoyed and delighted. He equates this joy and delight with arriving at the first bhumi, which is called the 'exceedingly joyous' level. This is reached after an immense accumulation of merit. Arriving at the first bhumi is the path of seeing the nature of things directly. At that point, immense joy and appreciation takes place. This is what he describes upon realizing Mahamudra.

Now, with the joyous appreciation of a lineage son of the Dakpo buddha,
I am inspired to speak out.

He felt moved to express his realization out of nonconceptual great compassion for all other beings, his disciples and followers. He thought "I must share my experience so that they, too, can realize this." He was overwhelmed, overpowered by strong compassion, he could not help but sing this song.

After describing the qualities of connecting with a root guru, Jamgön Kongtrül also describes the qualities of the lineage masters under six points. The first point is about Tilopa.

In the west, in Uddiyana, the secret treasure ground of the dakinis,

This is the place where Tilopa had direct vision of Vajradhara and received the pith instructions in person.

The great siddha, Tilo
Opened the treasure of these three gems.

These 'three gems' refer to the wishfulfilling gem of the path of ripening, the wishfulfilling gem of the path of liberation, and the wishfulfilling gem of transmission. Having received these extraordinary three gems, Tilopa transmitted them to the subsequent lineage masters.

The person to whom Tilopa transmitted the teachings was Naropa:

In the north, in the hermitage of Ravishing Beautiful Flowers
The learned Mahapandita, Naro
Showed the mark of a siddha, indivisible prana and mind.

The name 'Ravishing Beautiful Flowers' is translated here from Tibetan, but in Sanskrit the name is Phulahari. Jamgön Kongtrül considered this a very important location. His third incarnation went, together with Gyaltsab Rinpoche, to try to locate the exact place where Naropa lived and practiced. They did find the spot, but discovered it had been taken over by Muslims and that there is nothing to do about it. Out of their great aspirations and prayers, Jamgön Kongtrül the Third established a place in Nepal to invoke the blessing and spiritual qualities of Phulahari.

I feel it is very important for present-day practitioners to embark upon a pilgrimage to the newly established Phulahari temple, practice in retreat, and offers prayers and supplications there. This will partially fulfill the aspirations of the first, second and third incarnations of Jamgön Kongtrül.

Having met with Tilopa and received the pith instructions, Naropa practiced at the location called Phulahari, 'Ravishing Beautiful Flowers,' and there he gained mastery of his own nadis, pranas and bindus by utilizing their extraordinary key points. Reaching mastery over the nadis, pranas and bindus, or the channels, energies and essences, he realized the nature of mind. Through this realization, he showed the mark of a siddha, meaning the sign of accomplishment, which is the indivisible nature of prana and mind.

In the south, in the land of herbs, the valley of Trowo,
The translator, emanated from Hevajra,
Established the source of the river of all siddhas.

In Tibet, in the district of the Valley of Trowo, the great master who received the lineage from Naropa was a Tibetan named Marpa, the Great Translator, who himself was an emanation of Hevajra. Through his great level of realization, he became one of the chief mahasiddhas in the land of Tibet.

KNOWING ONE LIBERATES ALL

In Jamgön Kongtrül's song, the verses first extol his root guru, then the lineage masters. In each case, geographical locations are mentioned: Tilopa in western Uddiyana, Naropa in the northern Ravishing Beautiful Flowers Hermitage, Marpa in the southern Valley of Trowo, and Shepa Dorje or Milarepa, in the western Labchi snow range. We may wonder why ordinary geographical locations are included when talking about enlightened masters. Why bother stating their dwelling places in the context of describing the qualities of samadhi, the wisdom present in their state of being? There is a reason for this.

These masters were born as human beings in our world, the southern Jambu Continent. Having taken birth here, they received Dharma teachings and practiced them. Through this practice, they attained realization of the supreme and common accomplishments. Afterwards, they were capable of guiding other people and there are stories of how they did so. If this were not the case, if these masters were some kind of superhuman celestial beings from beyond this world, we would feel alienated from them and consider their accomplishments completely beyond our reach. For instance, had they been dharmakaya buddhas from beyond our normal world, that would be very disheartening because it would seem impossible for us to emulate them. But because they were human beings, we as human beings can follow in their footsteps, practice the Dharma and attain realization. In this way, we experience a strong feeling of reassurance and confidence.

In the west, in the Labchi snow range,
Attained the state of unity in one lifetime.

Among the lineage masters, the fourth mentioned is Shepa Dorje, Milarepa. The Six Fortresses were among his many retreat places. The most well known of these is found in the Labchi snow range.

Shepa Dorje was one of Milarepa's names, but he had other aliases. He was called Dorje Gyaltsen, which means 'Vajra Banner of Victory,' Thu Chen, 'Great Sorcerer,' and Milarepa, 'Cotton-clad Mila.' But Shepa Dorje, 'Laughing Vajra,' was his secret name. It was given to him by the dakas and dakinis who appeared above the mandala during the Chakrasamvara empowerment, conferred upon him by the great master Marpa. The dakas and dakinis declared that his name should be Shepa Dorje, which in Sanskrit is Hasa Vajra.

Milarepa was a disciple of the true meaning. Possessing diligence and intelligence, he was able to purify all his obscurations and negative karma and in that very body and lifetime realize what is called the unified state of a vajra-holder or Vajradhara. As I mentioned earlier, Milarepa himself stated that he was not the emanation of any buddha or bodhisattva. He professed to be a 'great sinner.' But he was able to meet a uniquely qualified master and receive the extraordinary teachings on Mahamudra and the Six Doctrines of Naropa.

In the east, in heavenly Dakla Gampo,
The honorable physician, the second Victorious One,
Realized the samadhi of the tenth bhumi.

The fifth master mentioned in the lineage is Gampopa, who was predicted by Buddha Shakyamuni as the future incarnation of the bodhisattva Youthful Moonlight. The prediction stated that he would be seated amid the mountains upon a king's throne. Such a place actually exists.

Gampopa met Milarepa and received the pith instructions. Later, he went to practice in solitude in an extremely remote place called Dakla Gampo, which is likened to a buddhafield or celestial realm. When he arrived in this totally unpopulated area, Gampopa vowed, 'Now, for thirteen years, I will concentrate one-pointedly on samadhi training, and not depart for any other place.' He formed the resolve to remain in a small retreat hut and focus strictly on practice. But that same night, he dreamed that a dakini appeared before him and said, 'Compared to spending 13 years in meditation, it is better to spend 13 years benefiting others.' When he woke up, he thought, 'How can I benefit beings by staying in this remote place?' Yet, that same day, a meditator, who became his first disciple, appeared. Afterwards, disciples kept arriving until eventually there was a

gathering around him of 800 meditators whom he taught. This is what is mentioned here.

In the chakras of Body, Speech and Mind,
The hosts of siddhas of the four great and eight lesser lineages
Obtained the life-force of Mahamudra
And could not help but attain enlightenment.

After Gampopa, there appeared innumerable other masters among his disciples. They are mentioned as the 'four great and eight lesser lineages.' In this context, Gampopa's chief disciple was the first Karmapa, Düsum Khyenpa. Gampopa himself gave him the prediction, 'My son, go to Khampo Gang-ra in the east and make that your seat of accomplishment. By doing so, your activity will spread throughout central Tibet, Tsang and Kham. The first Karmapa did as he was told. First, he established his seat in Khampo Gang-ra in Kham. This is his Body seat. Afterwards, his Speech seat was established at Karma Gön. Later, his Mind seat was established at Ogmin Tsurphu in central Tibet. From that time forth, the lineage continued.

Another of Gampopa's chief disciples, named Dorje Gyaltsen or Phagmo Drubpa, initiated many of the other Kagyü schools. Practitioners in these lineages who attained supreme accomplishment, the enlightened state, have been as innumerable as drops of rain.

The next lines describe the qualities of abandonment and realization of all the lineage masters from Tilopa down until Jamgön Kongtrül's own root guru, Situ Padma Nyinchey Wangpo. Due to their great qualities, they 'could not help but attain enlightenment.' In other words, enlightenment was unavoidable. Why did all these masters in the four great and eight lesser lineages, from Tilopa down to Jamgön Kongtrül's own rootguru unavoidably attain enlightenment? Because they established the life-force of Mahamudra in their stream of being. This is the special quality, the strength and power of Mahamudra training, that makes the attainment of enlightenment unavoidable.

Skilled in magnetizing through bodhichitta,
They could not help but benefit beings.

These masters of the four great and eight lesser lineages were extremely successful in benefiting beings. Vast gatherings of followers and many disciples flocked around them. This was not the result of some political trick or deceitful manipulation on their part. They did not try to acquire greatness by gathering many disciples. It happened in a spontaneous way.

Why? Because they were 'skilled in magnetizing through bodhichitta.' Due to their motivation by the attitude of awakened mind called 'bodhichitta,' the strong wish to benefit all beings, they did not have to deliberately try to attract followers. When people come in contact with someone who is very kind, generous and protects others, they naturally feel, "This is my friend. This is the kind of person I can trust." Conversely, when someone spreads slander and harms others by wrong conduct, other people will feel, 'This hostile person is unpleasant to be with. This is not a friend, someone I can trust.' Such results spontaneously follow. The reason why all the great masters had tremendous success in benefiting beings, had numerous disciples and vast activity was due to their precious motivation of enlightened mind. Bodhichitta fully unfolded within their stream of being and they worked solely for the sake of other sentient beings.

Having obtained the profound wealth, the perfection of the two accumulations,
They could not help but become prosperous.

The great splendor and wealth belonging to the mahasiddhas of the Kagyü lineage was not amassed by means of a deliberate pursuit on their own part. This also occurred spontaneously due to their vast gathering of the two accumulations: the accumulation of merit with reference point and the accumulation of wisdom beyond focus. Because of this enormous accumulation of merit and wisdom, 'they could not help but become prosperous.' Extraordinary wealth and splendor was naturally gathered.

The fourth quality mentioned in the song is:

Fully understanding that knowing one liberates all,
They could not help but fulfill the great prophecy.

This means that they possessed immense learning that was not the result of spending years studying or attending university. Rather, it arose from 'knowing one that liberates all.' The one thing to be known is the natural state of Mahamudra. Because of seeing, directly as it is, the essence of original wakefulness, the wisdom state of Mahamudra or the supreme discriminating knowledge itself, the darkness of ignorance and unknowing is utterly eliminated. Therefore, there is no longer any ignorance or lack of knowledge. In fact, when there is no doubt whatsoever, immense learnedness results.

Having described the superb qualities of the root and lineage masters and the excellent fortune of following such a lineage, Jamgön Kongtrül gives two examples to support this. The first example is:

Lineage sons of these wealthy fathers
Possess the great self-existing riches of this previous karma.

The son of a rich father is naturally rich, due to his merit. Such a person does not need to do anything other than possess the merit to have been born into a rich family. He does not need to be intelligent or diligent or lucky; he only needs to have a rich father. In the same way, if we have the tremendous fortune to connect with the lineage of these sublime masters, without having to be especially intelligent, we still inherit the immense wealth of the lineage.

The second example:

They are the children of snow lionesses and great garudas.
By the power of their family bloodline, they are completely matured at once.

The offspring of a snow lion or garuda do not need to engage in a lot of training, eat vitamins or special foods in order to develop their prowess. The tremendous strength and capacities appear naturally, due to the power of their family bloodline or species. These attributes do not come from some other source.

This means that:

As followers of the lineage of Kagyü siddhas,
Their meditation is naturally born through the power of these blessings.

The greatest quality stems from receiving the extraordinary oral instructions from our root guru as well as the blessings of the lineage, not from being smart or especially lucky. Nor does it come from merely pretending to practice, as Jamgön Kongtrül says:

Bragging of their pain in many years of practice,

Simply having spent many years trying very hard to engage in practice is, in itself, not sufficient. This is not where the blessings of accomplishment come from. Someone can say, "I've practiced in difficult conditions for all these years," and then consider himself quite special due to this. But hardship in itself is of no benefit whatsoever. Someone may even be:

Proud of dwelling in indolence.

Although we may have spent many years in retreat in a remote, unpopulated place, if we have been unable to intelligently penetrate to the core of practice, unable to resolve our doubts, or unable to be diligent in the true meaning, just relaxing for some time in a quiet area will not be very helpful.

Boasting of having endured such pain,

Some people may be tremendously diligent and undertake great hardships in their practice, but if it is done blindly, without really knowing the key points, that is not something to brag about.

Undermining others and haughty,

This means one considers oneself incredibly special because of engaging in profound practices, and demeans others who have not done such practices. Criticizing others while exalting oneself is not how to attain blessings and realization.

Keeping score with discursive thought of self and others
In counting up the realizations of the bhumis and the paths,

Some people compare themselves with ordinary people, 'keeping score with discursive thought of self and others.' Every time they gain a little experience, such as an unusual dream, they consider this event very special and superior. They count these experiences and try to figure out which bhumi or level of realization they have arrived at. Such activity is totally futile. About this list of faults, Jamgön Kongtrül says:

These are the qualities of the ignorant meditators in this dark age.

These characteristics come from not really understanding how to practice or to receive the pith instructions. Just spending time engaging in an ignorant, stupid way of meditation will not lead us to become a siddha or an accomplished being.

We do not possess these, and though I do not have the title of a siddha,
Nevertheless, through the excellent oral instructions of the example lineage,
I have seen the wisdom of the ultimate Mahamudra.

Jamgön Kongtrül himself says he had the immense fortune to receive the precious, excellent oral instructions of the pure lineage. This is why he has seen the wisdom of ultimate Mahamudra. 'Seeing the wisdom of ultimate Mahamudra' by means of the extraordinary instructions and blessings of the lineage usually occurs in the form of the ripening empowerment. There are two types of empowerment: 'unique' and 'common.' The unique or special empowerment is the pointing-out instruction or an introduction to the state of original wakefulness, the wisdom which is the nature of the empowerment. This is what is pointed out during the empowerment ceremony.

Through the vase empowerment, we are empowered to practice the form of the deity. Through the secret empowerment, we are empowered to practice the total purity of the channels, energies and essences. Through the wisdom-knowledge empowerment, we are empowered to realize or recognize what is called the example wisdom. These three of the four empowerments, the vase empowerment, secret empowerment and wisdom-knowledge empowerment, are conferred in order to realize the ultimate, which is the fourth empowerment, also called the precious word empowerment. The fourth empowerment is the direct introduction to the wisdom of ultimate Mahamudra. This empowerment is often given by means of a symbolic gesture such as showing a crystal. The vajra master introduces the original wakefulness, the nature of mind, the nature of all things, the natural state of Mahamudra. This is the meaning of the 'unique or special empowerment.'

There is also a common or ordinary way of empowerment, in which we simply participate in the ceremony and receive some degree of blessings. Simply receiving the blessings ensures that at some point in the future we will have the fortune to realize the true empowerment.

In the tradition of Mahamudra, the natural state of Mahamudra is not only pointed out during an empowerment ceremony, it can also be pointed out based on the pith instructions. By the means of the oral instructions, the disciple can be introduced to the wisdom of ultimate Mahamudra.

Ground Mahamudra is the view, understanding things as they are.
Path Mahamudra is the experience of meditation.
Fruition Mahamudra is the realization of one's mind as buddha.

Jamgön Kongtrül mentions that, having been introduced to Mahamudra, there are three aspects: ground Mahamudra, path Mahamudra, and fruition Mahamudra. As described here, ground Mahamudra is, in the sense of intellectual understanding, arriving at the correct view of under-

standing things as they are by means of inference or deduction. Path Mahamudra is to be directly introduced to the nature of Mahamudra in our own experience. By training in the correct experience of the nature of Mahamudra, we actualize fruition Mahamudra. Fruition Mahamudra is what all the masters of the Kagyü lineage describe as 'realizing the perfectly enlightened buddha within the nature of our own mind.'

Based on ground Mahamudra, we can experience path Mahamudra and realize fruition Mahamudra. For Jamgön Kongtrül this took place within his stream of being, not because he was great or special, but as he says:

I am unworthy, but my guru is good.
Though born in a dark age, I am very fortunate.
Though I have little perseverance, the oral instructions are profound.

Jamgön Kongtrül declares that he lacks any extraordinary qualities or virtues whatsoever. He acknowledges he was born into a dark age and has 'little perseverance.' Even though he has realized the ground, path and fruition, it does not make him feel special. He regards himself as just an ordinary, 'unworthy' practitioner. He is saying this to humble conceit.

So, how did he reach such attainment? Jamgon Kongtrul attributes it to the excellence of his guru. He had the excellent good fortune to be accepted by a sublime root master with manifold qualities and blessings. Furthermore, although he was born in a dark age in which the 'five degenerations' are rampant, and not during the Age of Perfection, a Golden Age, still he had the tremendous fortune to connect with a pure lineage and receive the pith instructions and blessings necessary for practice. In that sense, he did possess very immense fortune.

In terms of faults, Jamgon Kongtrul describes himself as being lazy and unpersevering, indicating that he was not a very vigorous or diligent practitioner. He humbly states that the reason realization was able to arise was solely due to the profundity of the oral instructions.

In this song up till this point, Jamgön Kongtrül has presented the qualities of his root guru, the qualities of the lineage masters, and the faults of the practitioners of the Dark Age. He has done so in order for us to understand, and later to experience and realize, the true state of Mahamudra. In the next section of his song, he will begin to explain the view of Mahamudra in terms of ground, path and fruition.

A GARUDA FATHOMING SPACE

We have covered the section describing the reasons for singing this song. Now, begins the main part of the song, which is on Mahamudra.

Mahamudra here is divided into three points: ground Mahamudra, path Mahamudra and fruition Mahamudra. The meaning of ground Mahamudra has two sections: one is stated in terms of inference, the other through direct perception.

As for ground Mahamudra:
There are both things as they are and the way of confusion.

The first, ground Mahamudra in terms of what we can intellectually understand by means of inference, is divided into two points: 'things as they are,' and the 'way of confusion.' 'Things as they are' refers to how the natural state really is, the basic condition of things. There are reasons why we fail to realize or clearly perceive the nature of things. The second point, the 'way of confusion,' describes the causes and circumstances through which we become mistaken about the nature of things.

This basic state of ground Mahamudra encompasses both the way reality truly is, and how it seems to be. In essence, how it really is, there is no difference between what is called samsara, not having realized the basic condition, and what is called nirvana, having realized the nature as it is. The very identity or essence of both the confused and the realized states – of both samsara and nirvana – is not different. Within the essence itself, no distinctions exist. Their very nature is indivisible. The very heart or core of samsara is nirvana. Nirvana is not separate from or apart from samsara either. Therefore, it is said:

It does not incline toward either samsara or nirvana.
And is free from the extremes of exaggeration and denigration.

'It' refers to ground Mahamudra. 'Exaggeration' means adding something which is not already present. The state of ground Mahamudra is not superimposed upon anything in any way whatsoever. At the same time, it is also free from the extreme of denigration, meaning subtracting anything which is already present. In other words, it lies totally beyond any kind of extraneous formulations that we try to make about it. By being unchanging in nature, it is:

Not produced by causes, not changed by conditions.
It is not spoiled by confusion
Nor exalted by realization.

It is primordially and spontaneously present. Since the essence is unchanging, it cannot be altered by conditions or circumstances.

When deluded about the natural state and roaming about in samsaric existence, is our nature in any way worsened? No, it is not. The basic state of Mahamudra, the natural state itself, is not spoiled by confusion. It is not changed in any way whatsoever. Is the natural state of Mahamudra improved through being realized? No, it is not. It is not an entity or identity that can be either worsened by confusion or exalted by realization.

The great treatise called the *Uttara Tantra* says:

The nature remains unchanged
Like a jewel, like water, like space.

When a jewel is encrusted by rock or dirt, its inherent identity is not changed in any way whatsoever by means of polishing. Whatever it was before polishing, is exactly what it is after. In the same way, although water may be muddied by dirt, the water itself has not changed. And while space can be covered by clouds, the space itself remains unchanged by them. In the same way, the basic state of Mahamudra is not spoiled by confusion and not exalted by liberation.

It does not know either confusion or liberation.

The natural state, the basic condition of Mahamudra is empty in essence. Although it seems as though we are deluded and roaming about through samsaric existence, our basic identity or nature is not changed or confused in any way whatsoever. When there is no 'thing' that is deluded or confused, there is also no entity to be liberated either. What is the reason for this? Shantideva gives an explanation using the rough example of dreaming that one has given birth to a child that died. But if the child was never born, how could it have died? Since our nature has never been confused in samsara, it cannot be liberated either. Our innate nature is subject to neither confusion nor liberation. The unmade essence, the ground, the natural state of Mahamudra, is naturally, from the very beginning, emptiness. Emptiness is uncreated. That it is unmade does not imply that it is nothing whatsoever, like the child of a barren woman or the horns on a rabbit. All types of appearance, all experience, is unobstructed; anything can arise, all the various pure and impure phenomena.

Since no essence exists anywhere,

This means the natural state of Mahamudra, our basic nature, is not comprised of or made out of anything whatsoever.

Its expression is completely unobstructed and manifests everywhere.

In other words, any content of experience – in any form whatsoever – can arise and be experienced unobstructedly.

This basic state of Mahamudra encompasses, or is present, throughout all samsaric and nirvanic states. Therefore, it is said to be all-pervasive.

Pervading all of samsara and nirvana like space.

This was about the basic state of Mahamudra, the ground itself.

Next, Jamgön Kongtrül explains how the ground is experienced, first in accordance with the view of the Mind Only School, by establishing that all appearances – all experience – is mind. Then he explains this in accordance with the view of the Middle Way, in which even this experience is empty of any independent nature, as it is emptiness. Here, the song says:

It is the ground of all confusion and liberation.
With its self-luminous consciousness
And its alaya-vijnana.

The basic state of Mahamudra forms the ground, or basis, for all confusion, meaning the deluded state of samsara. When realization and liberation are attained, this same basic state of Mahamudra forms the ground or basis for such attainment. Without falling into any category whatsoever, it is not confined to either samsara or nirvana. That is why it is said to be the basis or ground of all, the *alaya*.

Regarding the alaya, in terms of the Mind Only School, the six or seven aspects of consciousness are always limited or confined to one particular function. For example, the eye consciousness is the experience of visual objects; it is seeing. The ear consciousness is confined to hearing. The nose consciousness is restricted to smelling, and so forth. The mind con-

sciousness formulates thoughts and concepts about everything. The seventh consciousness, called the defiled mental consciousness, is that which adheres to the concept of self, of ego. All these aspects are limited to their particular function, while the *alaya vijnana*, the all-ground consciousness, is not limited or confined in any way whatsoever. It simply remains 'self-luminous,' meaning consciousness that is cognizant by itself.

As for the view of the Mind Only School, all experience is nothing but mind. When we perceive a visual object by means of the eye consciousness, the object seen by the eyes seems to somehow exist in our own experience, separate from and outside our own mind. The same applies when a sound is heard: it appears to us that the sound exists somewhere other than in our own mind. The other consciousnesses or aspects of cognition evoke the same assumption. But in fact, what we experience does not exist any other place at all: it exists only the contents of our experience. In other words, all appearances, whatever is perceived, are nothing but mind. They are *mind only*.

'Realization,' according to the Mind Only School, occurs when realizing that all appearances are illusory and lack any independent existence apart from being mere perceptions. The basis for this, which is the self-luminous consciousness – the alaya vijnana – is neutral by nature, neither virtuous nor unvirtuous. It allows all phenomena to arise. It does not belong to either of the categories called 'samsara' or 'nirvana.'

According to Buddhist philosophy, the Mind Only School is an excellent and correct view. So, what can be wrong with it? There is still some holding on to the notion that mind itself does truly and ultimately exist. This view is taught because it may be too frightening to immediately have a view in which no entity whatsoever possesses any true existence, that everything is emptiness. Therefore, a view is presented in which a basis, called mind or consciousness, does exist. Yet, sooner or later, one must face the facts and establish the real condition of what is – that even mind, experience itself, lacks any true or concrete existence; that its nature is emptiness as well. This is done by means of the view of the Middle Way School, Madhyamika.

Regarding Madhyamika, there are two different approaches towards the ultimate truth. One approach places more emphasis on space, dharmadhatu. This approach emphasizes the nonexistent nature of mind and all phenomena – in other words, the space-like nature of all dharmas. The view is called the *Rangtong* Madhyamika school.

While all things, meaning mind and phenomena, are empty of nature, it is not a complete nonexistence. There is simultaneously a wisdom quality, the cognizant, conscious aspect. To place more emphasis on that is called the *Shentong* school of the Middle Way.

In terms of the progressive stages of meditation in the Mahamudra system, we begin by training in the fact that all appearances are mind. Then we train in the fact that this perceiving mind is empty. Still later, we train in the meditation that this mind is not a blank, void state of emptiness; at the same time, there is some spontaneously present quality. Although these three progressive stages are not exactly the same as the philosophical viewpoints expressed in either the Mind Only and Middle Way schools, including the Rangtong and Shentong views, still there is a connection. Realizing that all appearances are mind is linked to the view of the Mind Only School. Realizing this mind to be empty of any entity whatsoever is linked to the view of the Rangtong School. Although this mind is empty of any entity whatsoever, it still has a spontaneously present quality of cognizance; this realization is linked to the view of the Shentong school.

As for the cognizant aspect of this neutral state,
Its essence is empty and its nature is luminous.
These two are inseparable and are the quintessence of insight.
It is space, ungraspable as a thing.

'Essence is empty' means the nature of mind is not comprised of or made out of any entity or essence whatsoever. It is utterly empty. But, at the same time, 'its nature is luminous,' meaning cognizant. These two aspects of emptiness and luminosity are not two separate entities. They are an indivisible unity – empty awareness suffused with knowing. This indivisible nature, being both empty and cognizant, is ungraspable as a thing. It is unidentifiable, like space. Jamgön Kongtrül gives some analogies:

It is a spotless precious clear crystal.

Imagine a crystal which is totally unblemished and flawless, transparent and utterly clear. When looking inside the crystal, no thing or entity is found whatsoever. It is entirely translucent. This example is often used as a symbol in the empowerment ritual to point out the true nature of mind. Whether we call this the view of Madhyamika or whether we call it 'pointing out the empty essence of mind,' it is a fact that this essence is completely devoid of any concrete entity whatsoever, just like a spotless clear crystal

It is the glow of the lamp of self-luminous mind.

While being empty, it is also by nature cognizant. This empty mind is spoken of in the Shentong view of Madhyamika as having a spontaneous-

ly present quality. Here the cognizant aspect is likened to the 'glow of the lamp of self-luminous mind.' This means that even though mind is empty of any entity, transparent like a clear crystal, it still has a radiant presence of natural, independent cognizance. The word 'self-' here means that it is by nature independent and does not require any other agent in order to cognize. This empty essence and cognizant nature are an indivisible unity. Mind is not an entity that can in any way be pinpointed, described or expressed by means of any analogy.

It is inexpressible, the experience of a mute.
It is unobscured, transparent wisdom.

At the same time, it is also unobscured. There is a knowing or conscious quality we call 'wisdom.' Mind is not a complete nothingness. In order to avoid any nihilistic tendency, the word 'wisdom,' which means 'original knowing,' is used. At the same time, mind is described as transparent, which also has the connotation of being all-encompassing or unimpeded.

The luminous dharmakaya, sugatagarbha.
Primordially pure and spontaneous.

This nature of mind is not something that can be achieved by attaining enlightenment. It is present in the unawakened state in exactly the same way as in the enlightened state. In the awakened state it is called the 'luminous dharmakaya' while in the unawakened state of an ordinary sentient being it is called 'sugata-garbha' – the essence of the sugatas. From primordial time, it is by nature utterly pure and empty. But at the same time as being empty, it is also spontaneously present. In other words, it is both empty, meaning primordially pure, as well as cognizant, meaning spontaneously present.

It cannot be shown through analogy by anyone.
And it cannot be expressed in words.

In the context of the progressive stages of meditation in the Mahamudra system, the next stage is called 'training in the naturally free, spontaneously present quality.' Whether we establish the nature of mind as empty, as in the case of the Rangtong school which focuses on the quality of space or dharmadhatu, or whether we establish the nature of mind as luminous, as in the case of the Shentong school which emphasizes the wisdom quality, these two facets are not separate entities. The nature of mind is in itself the indivisible unity of space and wisdom, dharmadhatu and original wakefulness.

This indivisible nature cannot be shown through any analogy whatsoever. No example can truly demonstrate how this indivisible nature actually is. At the same time, we cannot find any words that adequately express how the nature of mind, the indivisible unity of space and wisdom, really is. Any words we try to use will always confine the nature to being one way or another. We can try to find words to affirm a certain aspect, saying, 'This is how it is;' or we can try to find words that deny some quality, saying, 'This is how it is not;' but the basic nature itself lies totally beyond any affirmation or denial. This is what is meant by the famous statement: "Prajnaparamita, transcendent knowledge, is inexpressible, inconceivable and indescribable."

'Transcendent knowledge,' meaning the nature of mind, cannot be conceptualized, expressed by means of words, or described by means of analogies. It can only be known through personal experience within the domain of our individual wakefulness. Otherwise, the intellect or conceptual mind can in no way fathom or inspect how the nature of mind is. Conceptual mind or intellect is by nature ignorant of its own essence. Therefore, any kind of deduction or reasoning that we try to apply in order to figure out and conceptually establish how the nature of mind is will always fall short. The nature of mind is beyond thinking: it is inconceivable. This is what is meant by:

It is the dharmadhatu, which overwhelms mind's inspection.

The song continues:

Established in this to begin with,
One should cut all doubts.

'Established in this to begin with' means at the very outset we should, by means of intelligent reasoning, establish the nature of mind as totally devoid of any concrete entity. The naturally empty mind, unmade and beyond beginning, middle, and end, is primordially so. 'One should cut all doubts' about how the nature of mind is by arriving at an understanding that completely cuts through any attachment to nihilism, any attachment to eternalism and any attachment to the mind as being real or concrete in any way whatsoever.

When one practices meditation with the view,
It is like a garuda fathoming space.
There is no fear and no doubt.

After having described how to establish the view, Jamgön Kongtrül then explains how important it is to unify or combine view and meditation.

Whether we have approached the meditation practice by first intellectually establishing the view of the Mind Only School, in which all appearances are said to be empty, or whether we have done so through the view of Madhyamika's Rangtong school, which adds that the perceiving mind is also empty, or whether we have done so through the view of Madhyamika's Shentong school, which focuses on the luminous quality or buddha nature – in any case the view should be implemented in meditation practice. It should be assimilated and brought into our own experience. When doing so, it is said that we become like a garuda bird: the right 'wing' is the view while the left 'wing' is actual meditation practice. By flying with two wings, the garuda bird is able to soar throughout the sky. There is no limit to where we can fly, no limit to what can be realized when combining view and meditation practice. This is exactly what the great master, Chandrakirti, mentioned when he said: "Stretch out the two wings of the two truths. Extend the wing of realizing relative truth, extend the wing of realizing ultimate truth, and soar through the sky like a swan."

When a garuda bird flies through the sky, it is totally free from fear and doubt. It has no fear of falling and no dread of being captured by an enemy. In the same way, when we practice meditation after having arrived at a true and correct view, we need not fear going astray and taking an errant path in any way whatsoever.

The one who meditates without the view
Is like a blind man wandering the plains.
There is no reference point for where the true path is.

The 'one who meditates without the view,' meaning one who stubbornly and stupidly tries to practice what one has not understood or has no knowledge of, has no guarantee about where he or she will end up. Without the correct orientation regarding the view, we will be unable to progress in the right direction. It's like a blind person finding himself alone on a vast plain. He does not know for sure whether he is going in the right direction to reach his destination. He does not know whether he is moving south, west, east or north. In this way, it is extremely important to combine the view and meditation practice.

The one who does not meditate, but merely holds the view
Is like a rich man tethered by stinginess.
He is unable to bring appropriate fruition to himself and others.

On the other hand, we may have comprehended the correct view, but if we are incapable of applying it in our personal experience through medita-

tion practice, it is like a rich man who is hampered by his stinginess. If we tight-fistedly hold onto our wealth, we are unable to enjoy it ourselves and are also unable to be generous and share it with others. In this way, being wealthy does not benefit anyone in any way whatsoever. Similarly, even though we may be able to understand that the mind is empty and the nature is luminous, unless we apply this in practice it does not benefit us at all. Obviously, there is no real benefit in expounding this view to others.

Joining the view and meditation is the holy tradition.

This last line is the real advice, the precious instruction. Combining the practice of meditation with the view that realizes the mind is empty yet has the nature of luminous wisdom, the cognizant quality of wakefulness, is the 'holy tradition' – meaning the tradition of all noble beings.

This section covers the first of the two points which describe ground Mahamudra – the way things are, meaning the basic state, and the way of confusion, which refers to the ground which forms the basis of delusion.

The Center of a Cloudless Sky

The nature of things is 'as it is,' but fault arises when this natural state is not recognized. This is called the deluded or 'ignorant aspect.' This is also called all-ground consciousness, which is neutral in nature, meaning it is neither virtuous nor unvirtuous but is indeterminate. Because of not recognizing itself, it has the deluded aspect and forms the basis for samsaric existence. It is said that the *alaya*, which means the ground of all, is the basis for everything, but it is not the basis for complete perfection, meaning the state of nirvana.

Because of the ignorant aspect we fail to know our nature, which is empty in essence and, at the same time, luminous or cognizant. Failing to recognize our nature occurs due to five causes. Our nature is the natural state of dharmadhatu, not made from any entity whatsoever, empty of essence yet, at the same time, possessing the quality of cognizance. This essence is also described as unborn or nonarising. Nevertheless, at the same time, the expression or manifestation is unobstructed. This is the first cause. Because of this unobstructed expression or manifestation, which is usually called the 'luminous nature,' all possible types of experience can occur. This is the second cause. Incorrect thinking, or a wrong way of conceptualizing, takes place; this is the third cause. Due to this, we become involved in the arising of the five disturbing emotions, which acts as the fourth cause. And because of this we create karmic deeds which result in the arising of all different kinds of deluded phenomena. This is the fifth cause.

To reiterate, the lack of recognizing our nature occurs due to the five following causes: the unobstructed nature, the manifold manifestations, incorrect thinking, disturbing emotions, and the creation of karmic deeds.

This is what is referred to as the ignorant aspect of the alaya-vijnana, or all-ground consciousness, failing to recognize its own nature. This is

known as coemergent ignorance. Here in our text, it is compared to an ocean:

In the ocean of coemergent ignorance,
The waves of ego-fixation's confusion roll.

In terms of the eight consciousnesses, the eighth being the all-ground consciousness, the waves of the seventh roll. This seventh consciousness is ego-fixation. Here 'ego-fixation' does not merely refer to the formulated thought 'I am' – which belongs to the sixth consciousness, the conceptualizing 'mind consciousness.' Whether or not the formulated thought 'I am' is present, it is a deep-rooted or continuous holding onto the feeling of self that persists. This is like waves continuously rolling on the surface of the ocean.

The seventh consciousness is also called the 'defiled mind consciousness.' Here, 'defiled' is in the sense of the disturbing emotions. Based on this, the concepts of 'I' and 'other' are formed. The text says:

Cognition becomes a self, and projections become objects.

'Cognition' refers to the cognizant quality which is the luminous, cognizant aspect of mind – that which perceives. It is conceptualized into being 'me' – the 'self' – while all the different contents of experience are conceptualized into being external objects – external to the perceiver. This is what is called 'grasping' and 'fixation.' The outer objects are grasped by the inner fixating or perceiving mind. The habitual tendencies or patterns for this gradually solidify, becoming more and more rigid.

And so the habitual patterns of grasping and fixation solidify.
Thus, karma accumulates and fully ripens.

When this mistaken duality of experience solidifies, we create karmic deeds. These ripen, creating the experience of the six realms with its six classes of sentient beings, wherein we spin from one realm to the next. This is like being on the rim of a water wheel.

The rim of the water wheel of samsara turns,
But even while it turns, its essence is unstained.
Even while it appears, it is empty of reality.
Mere appearances are the vividness of the trikaya.

Now we begin a new section of the text, which describes the taking of direct perception as path. Prior to this, the meaning has been described as it is understood through inference or deduction. Not realizing the natural state is what creates samsara. At present, we are spinning around in sam-

saric existence. But even though we are circling in samsara, the essence remains flawless and completely untainted. At the same time, we experience seemingly external appearances which are devoid of reality and empty of any real existence. These appearances are nothing other than our own personal experiences perceived as 'other' or outer phenomena.

Whether we are discussing the inner mind that perceives or the outer appearances that are perceived, it is all the vividness of the three kayas. The empty essence is dharmakaya, the cognizant or luminous nature is sambhogakaya, and the unobstructed arising of manifestations is the vivid display of nirmanakaya.

Unborn is the nature of birth.
That unborn is unceasing.

Next, Jamgön Kongtrul explains that the nature of mind is beyond arising, dwelling and ceasing. Whether discussing the essence of that which perceives or that which is experienced, in both cases it does seem as though thoughts, feelings and appearances arise and come into being. But when we look closely into what it is that seems to arise, it becomes obvious within our direct experience that we do not find a place from where anything arises, nor an entity that arises.

The nature of birth is unborn. When something does not arise or come into being, there is no 'thing' to speak of as ceasing. Since there is neither an entity that arises nor ceases, there is no way to speak of an entity that abides. A thought or appearance cannot therefore be said to abide anywhere in between either. Therefore the text says:

On the threshold of nonduality, there is nowhere to dwell.

This nonarising, nondwelling and unceasing nature of both mind and appearances is very difficult to express.

From this mind, difficult to express,
Various magical displays of samsara and nirvana arise.

We cannot really formulate the nature of mind as truly existing in this way. Nor can we formulate or express it as not existing in any way whatsoever. It is very difficult to describe exactly how it is, yet from this difficult-to-describe nature of mind, all the innumerable magical displays of samsara and nirvana still do occur – but as magical displays.

All these innumerable magical displays of samsara and nirvana do not consist of any real or concrete entity in themselves. This is what is meant by the magical displays being 'naturally free' or 'self-liberated,' which is the next topic here.

Recognizing these as self-liberated is the supreme view.
When this is realized, everything is suchness.
When there are no obstructions or attainments, this is the innate nature.
When conceptual mind is transcended, this is the ultimate.

That which does not exist and is not formed from any substance whatsoever can therefore never bring about any harm or create any negative effect. When we realize that all the magical displays of samsara and nirvana are self-liberated or naturally free, then 'everything is suchness.' This 'suchness' is not an entity which we need to deny, remove or obstruct; nor is it an entity that we need to establish, affirm or attain. This natural state, the innate nature, lies beyond concepts. It is not something we can keep as an object in mind with the idea, 'This is how it is' or the idea, 'This is how it isn't.' It totally transcends any of conceptual mind's ways of formulating how the natural state is. That itself is the ultimate view.

This completes the section describing 'ground Mahamudra,' which is what should be established within our own understanding, either through deduction or through direct perception. In any case, we need to establish clearly and with certainty how the natural state is, how ground Mahamudra is.

Path Mahamudra is what must be experienced in our personal meditation training. We need to experience path Mahamudra in order to assimilate its meaning, which is the view. Now, for an explanation of the Sanskrit word Mahamudra. I mentioned before that *mudra* means 'seal' in the sense of a seal or stamp representing a nation's king. The seal automatically carries the power of the king's command. Even a small seal at the bottom of a decree or edict issued by the royal palace signifies that it should be obeyed throughout the kingdom. In this way, *maha* means all-encompassing, very vast.

Similarly, even though the nature of mind may be very small, this same nature encompasses or embraces all that appears and exists, all of mind and the phenomenal world. In this sense, the word Mahamudra is used.

As for path Mahamudra:
Mind and the phenomenal world are Mahamudra.

Why is the phenomenal world and its beings, all that appears and exists, said to be Mahamudra? Because everything is established or ascertained within the nature of our own mind – even what is perceived as

'outer' phenomena. In this sense, both mind and the phenomenal world are Mahamudra.

Next, Jamgön Kongtrül discusses 'coemergence,' which means 'arising together,' and refers to what has arisen together or what has coexisted with one's nature since beginningless time. In this context, 'coemergent' means 'primordially or originally present,' in the sense that the nature of mind and the mind itself, the thinking, emotions and so forth, have always been together, primordially coexisting.

Coemergent mind is dharmakaya.
Coemergent appearance is the light of dharmakaya.

The nature of this mind, which is indivisible from the nonarising empty nature of dharmadhatu, is what we can experience directly by means of the 'pointing-out instruction.' When we look towards the perceiver, that which we call our mind, we discover that it does not consist of any concrete entity whatsoever – its essence is empty. This is the empty nature of dharmakaya. In this sense, coemergent mind is dharmakaya. Nevertheless, at the same time, all kinds of appearances do occur as the expression or manifestation of this empty mind. In terms of external appearances there are what is seen, heard, smelled, tasted or touched. In terms of internal appearances, thoughts and emotions do occur. All of this is the 'light of dharmakaya,' which is empty in essence and not comprised of any entity whatsoever.

At the same time, due to the cognizant quality of the nature of mind, these appearances do take place, like sunlight issuing forth from the sun itself. In this case, dharmakaya is like the sun and coemergent appearances are like the sunlight.

Now, we reach the next section which is about meditation proper. Meditation practice consists of shamatha, vipashyana and the unity of both shamatha and vipashyana. In order to approach the practice of meditation, we must receive the blessings. This happens by means of a qualified master combined with our excellent karma, and by undertaking the preliminary practices, the *ngöndro*, which consists of four common practices and four special practices. The very root or heart of all the preliminary practices, which facilitates the state of samadhi taking birth in our stream of being, is guru yoga. By practicing guru yoga, we receive the blessings for recognizing the natural state of mind, the state of samadhi. That is why Jamgön Kongtrul says in this song:

When the blessings of the glorious guru
And one's karma come together,

One realizes one's nature, like meeting an old friend.

Through the combination of receiving the blessings and the fortunate residual of the continuation of past karma, recognizing the genuine state of samadhi is like reconnecting with an old close friend. This is not something that needs to be talked about a great deal; rather, it is something that should be assimilated within our personal experience.

Now, we come to the actual instructions on shamatha practice. Shamatha practice in the context of Mahamudra is unlike the usual training in stillness. Therefore, it is called the 'extraordinary nonconceptual shamatha.' The instructions for it differ from the normal instructions on training in stillness.

There are three instructions. The first is called 'directly cutting the sudden-born.' Here, 'sudden-born' refers to the sudden arising of thoughts, which must be directly cut through. This, perhaps, is not so easy, because our suddenly arising thoughts about this and that are accompanied by some degree of obsessiveness or fascination. We prefer to be involved in thoughts because we think they may be very important or very special. We believe that the way in which we sit and think about things is endowed with incredible significance, so it is not so easy to just let go or disconnect.

Nevertheless, when training in Mahamudra, the first step is to cut through and be able to relinquish our attachment to the thought that we are involved in by thinking, 'This is a direct obstacle to the practice of Mahamudra. I will not be totally engrossed in this thought pattern. Let's just cut it right here.' This is what is meant by 'directly cutting the sudden-born.'

Here, Jamgön Kongtrül says:

There is no point in much talk,
But the beginner needs various things.

This means there are some techniques needed at the outset.

One should abandon both welcoming and sending off thoughts
of past and future.

This means that when we are practicing meditation, we may have thoughts of what occurred in the past, such as certain activities we were caught up in which we turn over in our mind. This is like giving past thoughts an escort to usher in the past. We should disconnect from this process. Sometimes we send out a welcoming party for future thoughts, meaning we sit and anticipate what is supposed to happen, what we will

do and so forth in the future. Inviting thoughts of the future should also be avoided.

The instantaneous mind of nowness
Is the unfabricated innate nature.

What is left? The instantaneous mind of nowness, meaning the present state of mind, the present instant, which should not be altered or changed in any way whatsoever. We do not need to improve it, we do not need to worsen it. If it is empty, we do not need to fill it. If it is not empty, we do not need to try to make it empty. Just allow it to remain exactly as it is, which is the unfabricated innate nature. Simply relax and let be within that.

In meditation, there should be no trace of deliberateness.
One should not stray for an instant in confusion.

Cutting the sudden-born, meaning suddenly arising thoughts, is compared to being concentrated, or focused. On the other hand, it does not help to be too concentrated: we also need to be relaxed. So, the first instruction is to tighten while the second instruction is to loosen. In Tibetan, this instruction is called *gangshar somey* which means 'not fabricating or modifying whatever arises.' The key point of meditation is the absence of any trace of deliberateness. This means we should not sit with the thought, 'I am engaged in this meditation. This is what I am trying to do.' Not even a trace of a deliberate act of meditation should be present.

On the other hand, there should not be any distraction either. We should not stray from the attentiveness of meditation, from mindfulness and conscientiousness, for even an instant. In other words:

Nonwandering, nonmeditation, nonfabrication are the point.
With freshness, looseness and clarity,

'Nondistraction' means 'not straying away,' 'nonmeditation' means 'not deliberately trying to do something' and 'nonfabrication' means 'not fabricating.' These three key points are also expressed as freshness, looseness and clarity. 'Freshness' means being concentrated in the sense of being undistracted. 'Looseness' is 'nonmeditation,' not dwelling on something deliberately. 'Clarity' is like a clear crystal which allows whatever is to just be, without trying to tamper or modify in any way whatsoever. Simply remain in that state.

In this way, the second of the three instructions in shamatha is to leave whatever arises without fabrication. This emphasizes the looseness aspect.

The first instruction, 'direct cutting of the unborn,' emphasizes the tightness aspect. In other words, first concentrating, and then relaxing.

The third instruction is called 'skillful in the method of resting.' This is knowing the correct balance between tightness and looseness. Here the teaching says:

In the space of the three gates of liberation,
One is mindful, establishing proper watchfulness.
Always keeping the mind balanced between tight and relaxed,
One pacifies the accumulation of subtle, tangible and gross thoughts.
Rest in the state of natural, unfabricated mind.

The 'three gates of liberation' are that the nature of mind lies beyond arising, dwelling and ceasing. Within the state that is likened to space, we should place the watchman of mindfulness and conscientiousness on guard. In other words, we should be watchful and attentive in the correct way, which is not too tight or concentrated, and not too sloppy or relaxed either. The great master Brahman Saraha said:

Just as when a Brahman spins his Brahman cord,
Keep a balance between tight and loose.

When the cord or thread is spun, it does not turn out well if the strings are interwoven too tightly. On the other hand, if the weaving is too slack, it will not produce a nice cord either. A definite balance is needed between tight and loose. By sustaining the attention with the correct measure of balance between tight and relaxed, the multitude of very gross, tangible thoughts or very subtle thoughts will eventually utterly subside and be pacified.

The next section describes the result of the extraordinary way of practicing shamatha according to the Mahamudra system. We look into the nature of mind and rest in that unfabricated naturalness. Within the continuity of unfabricated naturalness of mind, all gross and subtle thoughts subside.

The four levels of experience arise in succession,

Through this, four stages of experience arise. The first stage is the experience likened to a mountain waterfall cascading from a steep cliff. This means that it will all of a sudden seem as though we have much more thought activity than usual. But this is not really the case. What has happened is that, for the first time, we are truly noticing how much thought

activity is already present. It is like the rush of a violent mountain stream. Yet, with further practice, the experience becomes like a steady flow of a river. The third experience is like the gentle, placid surface of the ocean. The fourth experience is like an utterly clear sky. These are the four progressive experiences of shamatha.

And the sun of luminosity continually dawns.

The 'sun of luminosity' is an example which means that the nature of mind is not like an expanse of pitch-black darkness. There is at the same time the presence of an incessantly occurring clarity. Recognizing this is what is called 'planting the root of Mahamudra realization.'

The root of Mahamudra meditation is established.
Without it, one's talk of higher realization
Is like building a house without a foundation.
However, excessive desire for this is the work of Mara.

This type of meditation experience is very important and is the foundation for further practice. But just to speak of higher realization without possessing the personal experience with both stability and clarity will not be of much benefit. It is like building a house without a foundation which will not be stable at all. On the other hand, if we cling too much to the stability and clarity of general shamatha practice, this is the 'work of Mara,' who is a deceptive and seductive demon.

Those who persevere, but have little knowing,
Are deceived by superficial virtues
And lead themselves and others along the way to the lower realms.
Even the good experiences of bliss, luminosity and nonthought
Are the cause of samsara if one fixates on them.

If we are extremely diligent in an ignorant attempt at meditation, without knowing much about genuine meditation practice, we can easily be deceived by Mara. We can be seduced by superficial virtues and various qualities which we feel are exceedingly great. We can lead both ourselves and others astray into the lower realms. How can this be? Through practicing shamatha, various excellent experiences arise, such as the experiences of bliss, clarity and nonthought. Even though it is good that these experiences occur, if we cling to or fixate on them, this itself becomes a cause for further samsara.

This completes the section on shamatha. Now we have reached the section on vipaśhyana.

When you intensify devotion in your heart,
Rock meets bone in insight.
And the ultimate lineage blessing is received.

'Devotion is the head of meditation, it is said.' To 'intensify' means to focus ardently on devotion. Through this, we will be able to receive the blessings of the true lineage – 'the ultimate lineage blessing is received.' 'Rock meets bone' is a phrase meaning 'authentic, genuine,' indicating the real state of Mahamudra is recognized through nondual awareness within our stream of being. However, this should be authentic, without any going astray or mistakeness.

Not straying into the four strayings,
Not falling into the three misunderstandings.
Transcending the four joys, free from the three conditions.

'Not straying into the four strayings' means avoiding four pitfalls, which are:

– 'Misconstruing emptiness as a remedy' means that when a negative emotion arises, we extrapolate, "The essence of this emotion is emptiness," and use the thought of emptiness as an antidote.

– 'Straying as to the essence of emptiness,' means instead of seeing directly, we superimpose emptiness upon everything through deduction and reasoning.

– 'Straying as to generalized emptiness' means we plaster the label 'emptiness' on everything in a very general way.

– 'Straying on the path with regard to emptiness' means we form the thought, 'Since everything is empty, there is no result from engaging in virtue and no effect from negative deeds either.'

It is important that our experience of emptiness be free from the fault of the four strayings. Nor should we fall into the three misunderstandings or errors, which are:

– 'Emptiness arising as an enemy,' which is very similar to misconstruing the path concerning emptiness. In this case we form the strong thought that everything is empty, therefore there is no good, no evil and no effect from practicing on the path.

– 'Compassion arising as an enemy' means we are overwhelmed by compassion for other beings, and convince ourselves that it is better to leave our practice and go out to help others, acting for the welfare of

beings even though we are not really capable of doing so yet. As a result, we help neither ourselves nor others.

– 'Cause and effect arising as an enemy' means we become petrified by contemplating the result of karmic deeds, so that we are unable to do anything because we fear our actions will go wrong and the results will be terrible.

We should also transcend the four joys which refers to joy, supreme joy, special joy and innate joy. All these result from the pranas moving through the different levels of the chakras while practicing the path of means, the Six Doctrines of Naropa. The ultimate, natural state of mind lies beyond any conditioned, temporary stage of the four joys.

We should also be free from the three conditions, which are the three experiences, mentioned above, of bliss, clarity and nonthought. We should not defile or spoil the state of realization through attachment to those experiences.

Realizing through the three stages of birth,
Untouched by the mind of the three great ones.
This is the self-existing nature, undefiled by experience.

'Realizing through the three stages of birth' means we realize or connect with the qualities by means of the three ways by which these qualities can take birth within our stream of being. The first is called the gradual type, meaning stage by stage from beginning to end in a progressive manner. The second is called sudden or instantaneous type, meaning all the qualities unfold at once. The third way is called the 'skipping-the-grades' type, meaning that without having to go through the steps successively, one jumps or skips to a higher level. Whichever of these three categories we may fall into, we should connect with or realize those qualities.

Realization should also be unspoiled or untouched by the mind, meaning the concepts, of the three great exaggerations. These are:

– 'Exaggeration of learning,' meaning just collecting information about the view of Mahamudra without genuinely connecting with the experience of samadhi within our stream of being. We nurture an intellectual understanding, our own version, of what the view is rather than experiencing the real thing.

– 'Exaggeration of reflection,' meaning too much reflection, speculation and intellectualizing. We mistake our feeling of certainty about the view for the state of samadhi, itself. We develop certainty from our own speculation, which is not the true samadhi, the real introduction to the mind. We engender mistaken ideas about the pith instructions.

– 'Exaggeration of meditation,' meaning overemphasis on meditation experiences without true understanding of the view. In this, the different experiences that arise through meditation practice are mistaken as being the state of samadhi.

We should be free of all the above-mentioned faults, and instead experience the self-existing nature undefiled by temporary experiences.

Rather than discussing these faults, Jamgön Kongtrul describes the virtues or qualities of the state of genuine vipashyana:

Like the center of a cloudless sky,
The self-luminous mind is impossible to express.

'Like the center of a cloudless sky,' it is empty of any entity whatsoever: this describes the empty quality. The next line describes the luminous or cognizant quality. In the sutras there is a famous line: "It is within the domain of experience of individual self-cognizant wakefulness." This is what is meant here by 'self-luminous mind' which cannot be expressed by any example whatsoever. Also, it lies beyond analogy.

It is the wisdom of nonthought beyond analogy,
Naked ordinary mind.
Not clinging to dogmatism or arrogance,
It is clearly seen as dharmakaya.

The 'wisdom of nonthought,' or 'nonconceptual wakefulness' is normally called 'ordinary mind' in meditators' terms. It is 'ordinary' in the sense of not being tampered with, improved or corrected in any way – just simply leaving it as it is. 'Naked' means not covered by any assumptions or temporary experiences that tend to fascinate us. Not covered by any of these, it is just the naked state of ordinary mind itself.

This is not an understanding which remains as a mere assumption. 'Dogmatism' here is our intellectualization of how the natural state is – not through actual direct experience but as the result of some information we have received or studied. We make up a version and assume that this is probably how it is. This is called 'dogmatism' or one's personal assumption of the view. Neither should it remain as 'arrogance,' a false pretense based on poorly founded experience. We just pretend to ourselves that 'this is how it is' in a rather arrogant manner.

Seeing simply and clearly as it is, is dharmakaya. Here, 'clearly seen' is a synonym for vipashyana.

The appearance of the six sense objects, like the moon in water,
Shines in the state of wisdom.

When directly experiencing the state of dharmakaya, clearly seeing ordinary mind, the appearances of the six sense objects occur vividly and clearly. Nothing is blocked or obstructed in any way whatsoever. Furthermore, the arising of various sense perceptions does not harm in any way whatsoever. This is what Tilopa meant when he said, 'Naropa, you are not fettered by appearances, you are fettered by attachment. So, cut your attachment!' This means that whatever appearances are perceived do not fetter, obscure or harm at all.

The problems we experience arise due to our attachment. All the different sense perceptions are just like reflections of the moon in water. They 'shine,' or are vividly present, as the state of wisdom. When recognizing that they are nothing but empty reflections, they become the continuity of original wakefulness.

Whatever arises is the unfabricated innate state.
When not modified, this is the 'way things are.'
Whatever appears is the nature of Mahamudra.
The phenomenal world is dharmakaya great bliss.

All experience is Mahamudra. Whatever appears and exists – the phenomenal world – is dharmakaya, which refers to the empty aspect. At the same time, there is the quality of great bliss.

Within path Mahamudra, there were three points: shamatha, vipashyana and the unity of the two. We have now covered the first two.

THE EXHAUSTION OF CONCEPTUAL MIND

We are now in the context of path Mahamudra. The two topics of shamatha and vipashyana have been covered, and we have arrived at the unity of shamatha and vipashyana. Jamgön Kongtrul says:

Both shamatha meditation of natural resting
And vipashyana, which sees the unseeable,
Should not be separated but unified
In stillness, occurrence, and awareness.

We can practice the unity of shamatha and vipashyana after we have been introduced to or had pointed-out the nature of vipashyana. Here, 'shamatha' refers to the time when we relax and rest loosely, free from involvement in thought activity. 'Seeing clearly the unseeable' means experiencing the nature of things, dharmata. This does not occur in the context of our normal mode of delineating material, concrete reality. It is seeing no thing whatsoever. Shamatha and vipashyana meditation can be practiced together. In any situation, be it stillness, thought occurrence, or awareness, insight into the true nature of things, shamatha and vipashyana should be unified, not separated. This is very important.

First, we progress through the training in shamatha, then in vipashyana, and finally in the unity of the two. At that point, we are growing accustomed to the basic state of dharmata, the true nature of things. At this level, we are not enmeshed in any deluded thinking that must be abolished or abandoned.

Beyond abandoning discursive confusion,
Beyond applying antidotes,

There will be a time when you spontaneously reach this.

It is beyond antidote, as we do not need to accomplish the basic state of Mahamudra by involving ourselves in some remedy of spiritual practice to counteract confusion. There will come a time when we will spontaneously arrive at or fully realize the natural state of dharmata, the nature of things.

We have now covered the topics of how to train in shamatha, vipashyana and the unity of the two. By applying path Mahamudra, we will obtain the fruition. According to the general system of Buddhadharma, fruition is reached by means of gradually progressing through the five paths and the ten bhumis, through the path of accumulation, the path of joining, the path of seeing, the path of cultivation and finally through the final fruition, the path beyond training, also called the path of consummation.From the very first bhumi, which is the attainment of the 'path of seeing,' until the tenth bhumi, a progressive attainment of fruition occurs.

The extraordinary system of Mahamudra includes the Four Yogas of One-Pointedness, Simplicity, One Taste, and Nonmeditation. These are sometimes called 'the 12 segments of the path of Mahamudra,' or 'the 12 of the four times three,' meaning that each of the four yogas is divided into three steps, making twelve steps altogether. This is explained further on in the song. In terms of the practitioner, Mahamudra is explained first in a detailed way and is then summarized.

When you have achieved realization,
There is nothing other than the meditative state.
At the threshold of freedom from loss and gain,
Even meditation does not exist.

It is explained one way for the beginner approaching meditation, but there is also the basic state of the way it really is, the natural state. That is, once we have achieved realization, or stability in the unity of shamatha and vipashyana and Mahamudra, then everything becomes the meditation state. Having captured the freshness, the natural state of realization, there is nothing which is excluded from this state of meditation. At this point, we need not abandon one thing and achieve something other than realizing the natural state as it is. It can also be said that at this point there is no meditation whatsoever, because there is no meditation object and no act of holding any object in mind.

But for those beginners, who are unable to dissolve the hairline of conceptualization,
Meditation is important.

When one practices meditation, there is experience.
This experience arises as the adornment of insight.

However, for a novice who still has the 'hairline of conceptualization' – referring to discursive thinking – conceptual thinking has not yet dissolved. In this case, training in meditation is extremely crucial. Why is this so important? Because when we engage in meditation training, it is possible to gain experience of the naked state of awareness, unadorned insight. Having experienced this, progress on the path is made possible. Progressing on the path, we will gradually journey through the four stages of Mahamudra called One-Pointedness, Simplicity, One Taste and Nonmeditation. These four divisions of the path will be explained now.

This path is divided into the four yogas:
One-Pointedness means recognizing the nature of mind;

The first of these four, One-Pointedness, has a definite onset or dividing line by which we can say that now 'One-Pointedness' has begun. The boundary of One-Pointedness is when we recognize the 'natural face' or the nature of mind. The moment of recognizing the nature of mind marks the onset of One-Pointedness.

Divided into the lesser, medium and greater stages:
One sees the alternation of bliss and luminosity,
One masters resting in samadhi,
And experience continuously appears as luminosity.

It is divided into three progressive stages, called the lesser, medium and greater stages of One-Pointedness. The 'lesser stage' is described here as 'seeing the alternation of bliss and luminosity.' This means that sometimes there is the experience of bliss and sometimes there is not. Sometimes there is the experience of clarity, or luminosity, and sometimes not. It fluctuates, switching on and off. This characterizes the lesser stage of One-Pointedness.

The 'medium stage' is characterized by having gained some independent power over the state of samadhi. According to our choice, we can master resting or not resting in samadhi. The 'greater stage of One-Pointedness' occurs when experience continuously appears as luminosity.

Simplicity means realizing the mind is without root;
Divided into the lesser, medium, and greater stages:

After this is Simplicity, which literally means 'absence of thought constructs.' When do we arrive at Simplicity? At the time of realizing that

mind is rootless, baseless and empty. This yoga also has three levels: lesser, medium and greater Simplicity.

One realizes that the arising, ceasing and dwelling are empty;
One is free from the ground and root of fixating on appearance and emptiness;
And one resolves the complexity of all dharmas.

In the 'lesser stage,' 'one realizes that the arising, ceasing and dwelling are empty,' meaning that there is no self-entity and that the mind is utterly rootless and baseless. The 'medium stage' involves realizing that the notion of perceiving appearance, as well as the notion of perceiving emptiness, are both rootless and baseless. The 'greater stage of Simplicity' is 'to resolve the complexity of all dharmas,' to cut through erroneous notions about all phenomena.

One Taste means dissolving appearance and mind into each other;
Divided into the lesser, medium and greater stages:

After Simplicity is the stage of One Taste. The starting point of One Taste is 'dissolving appearance and mind into each other,' which means external appearance dissolves into the mind within. In other words, subject and object – the perceived and the perceiver – are no longer apprehended as being two different, distinct entities. Rather, they intermingle, being of one nature or 'One Taste.' That is the beginning of the experience of the samadhi called One Taste.

All dharmas of samsara and nirvana are dissolved into equal taste.
Appearance and mind become like water poured into water.
And from one taste, the various wisdoms arise.

At the medium level, appearance and mind are no longer seen as distinct but intermingle like water poured into water. The greater level is that, although everything is one taste, the practitioner does not become stupid and unable to distinguish one thing from another. Rather, he or she possess discriminating wisdom, which is the wakefulness that sees all distinctions very clearly and individually. This arises in all kinds of different ways.

Nonmeditation means the utter exhaustion of conceptual mind;
Divided into the lesser, medium and greater stages:

The fourth yoga is called Nonmeditation and it begins with the utter exhaustion of conceptual mind. Here, 'conceptual mind' means the unaware, ignorant aspect of consciousness which apprehends or experiences in terms of the duality of perceiver and perceived. When such grasping is utterly exhausted, this marks the onset of Nonmeditation. This also has the three stages of lesser, medium and greater.

One is free from meditator and meditation,
The habitual pattern of primitive beliefs about reality are gradually cleared away,
And the mother and son luminosity dissolve together.

At the lesser level, the practitioner is freed from meditation and meditator. The duality of training ceases. The medium level is that the tendency for the two obscurations, cognition and disturbing emotions, is gradually purified. When this happens, the mother and son luminosities dissolve together. These mother and son luminosities are also known as the luminosity of the ground and the luminosity of the path. Although the ground luminosity or mother luminosity is always present as our basic nature, it is not actualized or realized due to being veiled by the cognitive obscuration. But when the son luminosity or the luminosity of the path, which is our individual experience of the basic nature, is trained in through recognition, then the cognitive obscuration is purified. That is the intermingling of the mother and son luminosities. When this final stage is reached, it is said:

The wisdom of dharmadhatu extends throughout space.

There is no longer any interruption or division in awareness: it is utterly unceasing.

This was a detailed explanation of the four yogas with their twelve aspects. What follows is a summary.

The great master Shang Tsalpa once said: "Mahamudra training is the sudden path, and it is delusion to divide it up into different stages." This is perfectly all right when speaking of the basic meditation state itself, which is indivisible. But when applying or describing our experience, all the great masters of the past have described it as a progressive path of individual stages, such as the twelve aspects of the four yogas. In *Moonlight of Mahamudra* by the great master Dakpo Tashi Namgyal, the path of Mahamudra is combined with the general system of the path and bhumis according to the general system. In this work, it is said the stage of One-

Pointedness covers the path of accumulation up until the path of seeing. The song says:

In short, in meditation:
One-Pointedness means that the mind is still as long as one wishes.

The 'path of accumulation' is the stage of accumulating a vast amount of merit. The second of the five paths, the 'path of joining,' is what corresponds to One-Pointedness. The third path, the 'path of seeing,' corresponds to Simplicity. This is also the attainment of the first bhumi, called the Truly Joyous. This is the direct seeing of the true nature of mind and all phenomena. After this is the 'path of cultivation.' That which is experienced directly at the first bhumi is cultivated and trained in. Therefore, this is called the stage of One Taste. It covers from the second bhumi up to and including the seventh of the ten bhumis. These are called the 'seven impure levels.'

The song says:

Seeing the very nature of ordinary mind,
Simplicity means the realization of groundlessness.
One Taste means liberating all possible dualistic fixations through insight.
Nonmeditation means transcending all sophistries of meditation and nonmeditation,
The exhaustion of habitual patterns.

The lesser and medium stages of Nonmeditation coincide with the final three of the ten bhumis, which are called the 'three pure levels.' The greater stage of Nonmeditation refers to complete enlightenment, the 'dharmakaya throne of nonmeditation.' At this point all notions or sophistries of meditation and nonmeditation, training or not training, are utterly transcended. This is the 'exhaustion of habitual patterns' in which the obscuration of disturbing emotions as well as the cognitive obscuration are entirely exhausted. This is called Nonmeditation.

In this way, from the great lords of yogins,
Naropa and Maitripa,
Down to the lord guru, Padma Wangchen,
The golden garland of the Kagyüs
Reached the dharmakaya kingdom of nonmeditation ...

SONG OF LODRÖ THAYE

All the lords of yogins, such as Naropa and Maitripa and so forth, down to and including Jamgön Kongtrül's own root guru, Padma Nyinche Wangchen, as well as all the 'golden garland of Kagyü gurus,' reached complete realization of Mahamudra, called the dharmakaya kingdom of nonmeditation, at the stage of Nonmeditation.

What are the qualities of realizing Mahamudra and reaching the stage of Nonmeditation? It is the same as the state of complete awakening to buddhahood which is described as endowed with the two qualities: abandonment and realization. With the quality of abandonment the two obscurations are utterly cleared away: the obscuration of disturbing emotions and the cognitive obscuration. Here, the song says:

Spontaneously cleared away the darkness of the two obscurations
Expanded the great power of the two knowledges,

The 'two knowledges' refer to the quality of realization in which the two knowledges fully unfold – the wisdom of seeing the nature as it is, and the wisdom that perceives all existing things.

Opened the treasury of benefit for the sake of others pervading space,
And remained in the refuge of mind free from doubt.

'Free from doubt' means their disciples need not harbor any doubts about their spiritual level, the attainment of complete enlightenment.

The Kagyü lineage is known to be passed from one to another.
It is not known by words alone, but by their meaning.

This lineage has been transmitted from master to disciple uninterruptedly to the present time. Whether we call the lineage-holders who have secured realization of the awakened state buddhas or mahasiddhas, these are not just names. In actuality, they really achieved this, and it is 'known not by words alone, but by their meaning.'

Please guide even such a lowborn savage as myself,
Who possesses the merest mark of your noble lineage,
Quickly to the kingdom of nonmeditation.

In these four lines Jamgön Kongtrül, describes himself as nothing but a savage, meaning someone full of disturbing emotions, completely lazy and so forth. He asks for blessings to be bestowed that he may progress

through the four stages of Mahamudra and quickly reach the kingdom of nonmeditation. He says:

Kind One, please utterly exhaust my conceptual mind.

Now, we have come to fruition Mahamudra. First, a summary is made in three lines mentioning the ground, path and fruition.

The fruition Mahamudra is spoken of like this:
The ground is receiving the transmission of the innate trikaya.

'Receiving the transmission' means in actuality recognizing our essence to be empty, its nature to be cognizant and its capacity to be the unobstructed play of experience. These are the dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya that are innate as the ground.

The path is applying the key points of the view and meditation;
The fruition is the actualization of the stainless trikaya.

Having recognized the view, to apply the key points in a correct and authentic way becomes the path. Fruition is the realization or actualization of the immaculate three kayas.

Therefore, its essence is emptiness, simplicity, dharmakaya.
Its manifestation is the luminous nature of sambhogakaya.
Its strength, manifold and unceasing, is nirmanakaya.

Again, these three lines refer to what is in Tibetan, called *shi, dang* and *tsal* which correspond to the three kayas. The *shi*, essence, is empty, beyond constructs, simplicity, the dharmakaya itself. At the same time as being empty, it also has the quality of cognizance, here called 'manifestation.' The luminous nature, or *dang*, is the sambhogakaya. How it expresses itself, its *tsal*, 'strength,' is unobstructed, manifold and unceasing. This is the nirmanakaya.

The next six lines describe the state of fruition as being the indivisible nature of space and wisdom. Space corresponds to dharmadhatu, which emphasizes the empty aspect, while wisdom emphasizes the quality of luminosity, or the cognizant capacity. These two are indivisible. The text says:

This is the sovereign of all reality.
The nature of Mahamudra is unity,
The realm of dharmas free from accepting and rejecting.

The 'realm of dharmas' refers to the dharmadhatu, the empty quality. But, at the same time as being utterly empty, meaning devoid of any entity

whatsoever, it is not completely nonexistent, like the hair on a tortoise or the son of a barren woman, but possesses the quality of wisdom, or cognizance. It is also described as:

Possessing the beauty of unconditioned bliss,
It is the great and vast wealth of wisdom.
It is the natural form of kindness transcending thought.

This undefiled bliss or tranquillity is present as well as the great wealth of wisdom. This unity is what expresses itself naturally in inconceivable forms of compassion.

The nature of mind is not something that needs to be affirmed or denied. In the context of the progressive stages of meditation of the Mahamudra system it is taught that the nature of mind which is spontaneously present is naturally liberated. It does not matter whether or not we emphasize the empty aspect according to Rangtong or the wisdom aspect according to Shentong: space and wisdom are indivisible in essence. The indivisibility of space and wisdom cannot be indicated by any example and cannot be described by any words. The nature of mind, the truth of dharmata, is realized by means of the individual's naturally cognizant wakefulness. If we try to establish it through the power of mind, saying 'the nature of mind is this, it is emptiness,' we miss the point. If by using conceptual mind we say 'it isn't such-and-such,' that is also incorrect and we will not be able to realize the nature of mind. Intellectual mind is ignorant in nature; it cannot investigate or fathom the inconceivable beyond concepts that is dharmata. The state of fruition Mahamudra, or the complete and perfect awakened state of buddhahood, is described as transcending both existence and peace, meaning samsaric existence and nirvanic peace. There is no dwelling in the three realms of samsaric existence, nor is there any abiding in the impassive peace of nirvana.

In the general Buddhadharma system we must gather a tremendous accumulation of merit through three incalculable aeons in order to awaken to true and perfect buddhahood. But by means of the path of Mahamudra, it is possible to accomplish this in one body and one lifetime. So, what is the quality of this twofold nondwelling that was just mentioned? The song says:

Through prajna, it does not dwell in samsara.
Through karuna, it does not dwell in nirvana.
Through effortlessness, buddha activity is spontaneously accomplished.

'Through prajna' means 'by knowing or realizing' the natural state of Mahamudra, the nature of things as they are, there is no basis for dwelling in samsaric existence. The basis is utterly eliminated. On the other hand, we do not, as in the case of a shravaka or pratyekabuddha, dwell in the passive state of nirvanic peace either. Out of great compassion for all sentient beings who have not realized the natural state of Mahamudra, we do not linger in the state of peace. Through the unity of prajna and karuna, meaning knowledge and compassion, we effortlessly act for the welfare of all sentient beings in a way that is utterly spontaneous.

The luminosity of ground and path, mother and son, dissolve together.

The state of ground luminosity, which is the basic nature of luminosity, is of course always present as the very nature of things. However, by means of path luminosity, meaning the experience of shamatha and vipashyana, and their unity, ground luminosity is actualized. At the point of fruition, the luminosities of ground and path, mother and son, dissolve together and become an indivisible unity. Moreover:

The ground and fruition embrace one another.

This means there is no longer any dividing-line between how things are and the realization of such, which is fruition. In this way, there is no expectation of finding the Buddha, meaning the awakened state, elsewhere than in our own mind.

Buddha is discovered in one's mind
The wish-fulfilling treasure overflows within.
E ma! How wonderful and marvelous!

In this way, whatever we might wish for and require, here likened to a treasure mine, is not found outside but overflows from within. This is most wonderful and marvelous. This completes the description of fruition Mahamudra.

Now we have arrived at a summary of view, meditation, action and fruition. The first line of this verse says:

Since in the view of Mahamudra
Analysis does not apply,

The 'view of Mahamudra' means we simply recognize the nature of things as it is, rather than forming our own speculative opinion or assumption about 'how it is' or 'how it isn't.' As this kind of thinking does not really apply, Jamgön Kongtrül says:

Cast mind-made knowledge far away.
Any self-made version of how the view of the natural state is should be thrown away.

Regarding the meditation, the song says:

Since in the meditation of Mahamudra,
There is no way of fixating on a thought,

This means we should not hold onto our own fixed idea about how the natural state is. The term 'natural state' implies 'as it is,' by itself. We should simply rest in how it is, without fabricating some intellectual understanding or conviction about it. The song goes on to say:

Abandon deliberate meditation.
Since in the action of Mahamudra,
There is no reference point for any action,

This means we do not need to perform any particular action in order to achieve or realize the natural state of Mahamudra, such as avoiding one thing and adopting something else. Rather:

Be free from the intention to act or not.

Since in the fruition of Mahamudra
There is no attainment to newly acquire,
Cast hopes, fears and desires far away.

'Fruition of Mahamudra' is the realization of the basic state which is already present. It is not some achievement that is new or unprecedented. Therefore, there is no need for any fear of not accomplishing, nor any desire, ambition or expectation to achieve something. Simply cast all this away.

Now, Jamgön Kongtrül describes the special, unique quality of the Kagyü Lineage. This is the ground, path and fruition of Mahamudra, or alternately stated, the view, meditation, action and fruition of Mahamudra. Referring to the realization of all the Kagyü masters, he says:

This is the depth of the mind of all Kagyüs.
It is the only path on which the victorious ones and their sons journey.

Traveling this path leads away from samsaric existence to the fully awakened state. This path is exactly the path of Mahamudra.

Theirs is the upaya that reverses the vicious circle of existence
And the Dharma that brings enlightenment in one life.
Here is the essence of all the teachings, sutras and tantras.

By cutting the very root of samsara, it is also the method, or *upaya*, that destroys the magical machinery of samsaric existence. It is the teaching through which we can attain buddhahood in this very lifetime. It is the quintessence of all the Words of the Buddha, including the extensive sutras and the profound tantras.

Jamgön Kongtrül concludes with the wish:

May I and all sentient beings pervading space
Together attain the simultaneity of realization and liberation,
And attain supreme Mahamudra.

This completes the explanation on the Song of Mahamudra.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

STUDENT: Yesterday you spoke about blessings. I don't understand how blessings seem to come in so many unexpected forms. Would you talk about the various ways in which the guru blesses the disciple?

RINPOCHE: Because of our faith and devotion, it is possible for blessings to appear in different forms. Unusual experiences such as an appearance of light are probably also blessings, but let's ask ourselves, "What are true, genuine blessings?" True blessings are realization, the genuine insight that takes birth within our personal experience of the correct meditation state itself. When our ability to correctly train in meditation becomes familiar and stable, we personally experience the insight of realization that is called the 'authentic blessings.' Other experiences, like lights and different visions and so forth, are called 'blessings,' but are more ordinary, common blessings.

It is often said that the sign of learning and studying is to be gentle and disciplined, while the sign of meditation practice is to have fewer disturbing emotions. Here, 'learning' or 'studying' does not refer to accumulating trivial, mundane information. It is 'learning' in the sense of absorbing the meaning of the words of the Buddha and of the explanations of what the Buddha said. All these Dharma teachings are really concerned with just one thing – how to eliminate our faults and how to realize virtue. Studying how to do that will ensure a thorough understanding of the negative characteristics of pride, jealousy, anger, desire and stupidity. When we become less and less involved in these and grow more and more gentle and disciplined, this is the sign of learning.

Here, 'meditation' means 'training.' When meditating, what is it that we train in? We train in the natural state of all things, in the natural state of mind. Why do we do this? Because we want to eliminate the negative effect of disturbing emotions. By training in the natural state, we are able to uproot disturbing emotions. That is why it is said that the sign of practice, meaning meditation, is to have fewer disturbing emotions.

On the other hand, disturbing emotions cannot be kicked out all at once so that presto, we are free of them. We have been wandering throughout samsaric existence for countless lifetimes – since time without beginning. Therefore, disturbing emotions and their shortcomings cannot just be switched off and done away with. If we try our best and are not instantaneously successful in being free of all disturbing emotions forever, there is no reason why we should become completely depressed and frustrated. Whatever energy we put into practice is never wasted. Even if we are not 100 percent successful, still, the practice we do and the opportunity to be able to practice and know how to practice is in itself an incredibly great fortune and is not wasted at all.

STUDENT: You mentioned the Six Doctrines of Naropa. Maybe I have a misunderstanding but I thought a person needed to practice the Six Doctrines a little bit before he or she could be introduced to Mahamudra. Perhaps that is incorrect?

RINPOCHE: In the Kagyü lineage, there are two great teachings passed down through the tradition. One is called the path of means, which is the Six Doctrines of Naropa; the other is called the path of liberation, which is Mahamudra.

There are some people who are unable to simply recognize the state of simplicity. Even if they do recognize the nature of mind, or the view of Mahamudra, they are not able to progress in this. Such people practice the 'path of means' which in terms of the development stage involves the preliminaries and the yidam practices. In terms of the completion stage, it involves the Six Doctrines of Naropa. This path of means greatly helps the practitioner to recognize the nature of mind and stabilize the recognition. If one has already achieved recognition, these practices nurture the progress and enhance the insight of realization.

On the other hand, there are some people who are unable to practice the Six Doctrines of Naropa or may not be very interested in pursuing them. At the same time, they are able to recognize the view of Mahamudra. By means of shamatha and vipashyana, they are able to recognize the

correct view within their meditation training and progress, even without having to engage in the completion stage practices with characteristics of the path of means, such as the Six Doctrines. Nevertheless, in order to progress further, they can be benefited by engaging in the practices of the Six Doctrines later on.

Sometimes people begin by practicing the Six Doctrines and then enhance that with Mahamudra. Sometimes people will start out with the view of Mahamudra and enhance that by means of the Six Doctrines. Either is fine. There is no fixed, categorical way of proceeding. What is indispensable is to give rise to the unique, genuine realization within our stream of being. Exactly how we proceed to attain this is of lesser importance.

STUDENT: Here in this song, Jamgön Kongtrül describes the recognition of one's own nature, and later the progression to 'seeing dharmakaya.' What is the difference between recognizing one's nature and the 'seeing of dharmakaya?'

RINPOCHE: According to the general system of teachings, it is impossible to immediately realize the true nature of things. It is said that there are five stages of path. The first is called the path of accumulation, because, in order to approach realization of the nature of things, we need to gather a tremendous accumulation of merit. We then try to meditate and gain some experience. Whether or not we are successful, we at least try to practice meditation in order to come closer to realization. This period is called the path of joining. When we directly see the nature of things, or dharmata, the nature of mind, this is called the path of seeing, which is traditionally the attainment of the first bhumi. In terms of Mahamudra, this is called 'recognizing the nature of mind,' or 'recognizing the natural state of Mahamudra.' Often, you hear people say they have had a flash or glimpse of Mahamudra, like the sun shining through a gap in the clouds. Having a glimpse of or recognizing the correct view of the natural state of Mahamudra is not itself sufficient. The mere glimpse or short moment of Mahamudra must become continuous and complete. We must arrive at the stage where there is no distraction or straying from this state. It must be totally unceasing and all-encompassing.

Having recognized the nature of mind, we need to train in this. This training is called the path of cultivation. We train again and again, progressing further and further, so that the meditation state becomes clearer and clearer and more and more stable. Finally, we arrive at the stage where realization is uninterrupted and has become continuous and all-encompassing. This is called the path beyond training, and at this point

there is no more straying. It is the complete and perfect realization of dharmakaya, also called the dharmakaya throne of nonmeditation.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, could you talk a little bit about the relationship between the four empowerments of Vajrayana? In particular, could you say something more about the wisdom of example empowerment in its relationship to ultimate Mahamudra, the fourth empowerment?

RINPOCHE: The four empowerments are known as the vase empowerment, secret empowerment, wisdom-knowledge empowerment and precious word empowerment. The first, the vase empowerment, usually has five aspects called the five knowledge empowerments, meaning the empowerments for the buddhas of the five families – one each for Vairochana, Akshobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitabha and Amoghasiddhi. By receiving these five knowledge empowerments, we are authorized to practice the development stage. It also serves as an aid to realizing the pure nature of the five disturbing emotions as being the five wisdoms, the five aspects of original wakefulness. This is called the 'body empowerment of the vase' by which we are bequeathed with the legacy to realize the nirmanakaya, the enlightened Body.

Next is the empowerment of speech, the secret empowerment. This second empowerment is given in order to realize sambhogakaya. Just as the voice is more subtle than the physical body, this second empowerment is more subtle than the first. When we receive the consecrated nectar on our tongue, we are empowered by means of its taste to realize the pure nature of the nadis, pranas and bindus, meaning the channels, energies and essences. We are empowered to realize the sambhogakaya state.

Next is the empowerment of mind, which is the wisdom-knowledge empowerment. The 'example wisdom' is pointed out, and often given by means of the symbolic smear of *sindhura* powder on a mirror. The 'wisdom of example' is almost the direct realization of the innate nature of things, of dharmata. However it is more the flavor of it. We are given the taste of the ultimate state of wisdom, experienced by means of an intellectual deduction, so that we get an approximate though clear feeling of what the ultimate state really is. This is called the 'example wisdom.'

When the ultimate natural state of Mahamudra is pointed out by means of the fourth, or 'precious word,' empowerment, this is the introduction to the unchanging nature itself – the ultimate state of Mahamudra.

STUDENT: I have heard about 'nonthought in the midst of discursive thought.' Could Rinpoche clarify this? Are they like the two sides of a

hand or the two sides of the same coin? Can they happen simultaneously, or is there a break?

RINPOCHE: 'Simultaneous' can be understood in two different ways: either on a very subtle level or in a more general way. If we speak in terms of a series of moments or instances of fractions of time – the subtle impermanence of things – then, in the context of discursive thought and nonthought, the word 'simultaneous' should not be applied in this way. When we are involved in thinking of something, this does not occur in a single instant, but takes place in a series of instances which we group together as the arising and disappearing of a single thought. A thought is not just one single moment. During that stretch of time which we call one thought, it is possible to realize nonthought. It does not usually happen in the beginning of thinking of something, but closer to the end of thinking about it. At that instant it is possible to realize the nature and then rest in that. Hence, the statement 'within discursive thought, I discovered nonthought.' They are not really simultaneous.

STUDENT: Is prajnaparamita the same as the nature of mind? Is it the basis of both samsara and nirvana?

RINPOCHE: Prajnaparamita, transcendent knowledge, is identical with the essence of mind. However, it is not the basis or source of samsara because samsara is formed out of unknowing, out of ignorance. Transcendent knowledge is not the cause of unknowing. At the same time, we can say that samsara takes place within the expanse, or space, of the innate nature of dharmata, because samsaric states of experience do not exist anywhere other than or apart from the expanse of the nature of things.

For example, based on the 'ground' of knowing the alphabet, we can acquire knowledge of a tremendous number of topics. If we do not know the alphabet, it is extremely difficult to become learned or truly educated. On the other hand, is the alphabet the cause of our being uneducated? No, it is not. It is the not knowing of the alphabet that is the basis for being uneducated, not the alphabet itself.

STUDENT: If we recognize innate wakefulness, do we still have to travel the path of the ten bhumis? If so, must we do that in one lifetime?

RINPOCHE: Do we have to? (Laughter) Yes, to arrive at complete enlightenment we need to go through the path which in the general system of Dharma is divided into five paths and ten bhumis. We do indeed need to cover that mileage in order to arrive at buddhahood; there is no way around that. But if you possess the extraordinary methods and have great diligence, then definitely this can occur in a single lifetime. Still, you would need to traverse the path very quickly. Take the analogy of traveling

home: You can go by boat, which maybe takes a couple of months, or you can fly in a few hours. But, you will not just spontaneously arrive there without covering the full distance. You have to journey over that distance. Whether you do it slowly or quickly is up to you, right?

STUDENT: Since Tibetan Buddhism has spread to the West, do you have a rough idea, very, very rough, whether or not any – and if so how many – Westerners have attained enlightenment? (Laughter)

RINPOCHE: (Laughing) On one hand, it is only a very short time since Buddhism went to the West. On the other hand, quite a number of years have gone by now since the Dharma became accessible, so why not? But I don't personally know how many there are or if there are any. Why? Because I am not clairvoyant.

STUDENT: At the time of practicing the yoga of One-Pointedness, especially at the time of practicing directly cutting sudden arising, what approach should one take to appearances of the five sense objects?

RINPOCHE: We need not do anything about the five sense consciousnesses or sense perceptions. In and of themselves, they are nonconceptual, meaning the arising of hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting and touching are just like reflections in a mirror, without any accompanying concepts or intrinsic value whatsoever. Therefore, they can be left just as they are. As Tilopa said, "You are not fettered by the way you experience, but by your attachment to it."

We as practitioners practice the direct cutting of sudden arising at the time of One-Pointedness. This occurs at the level of the sixth consciousness, or mental consciousness, which is conceptual. It forms all notions, such as conceptualizing 'this is good, that is bad,' or 'this should be accepted, that should be rejected,' and so forth. This is what must be cut. Based upon the concepts of this sixth mental consciousness, we become entangled within disturbing emotions and distraction.

Let us conclude with dedicating the merit of my teaching the *King of Samadhi Sutra* and Jamgön Kongtrül's song of realization, as well as your listening and practicing, towards the happiness and well-being of all sentient beings, towards peace and prosperity in the world, and towards pacifying the causes of war, disease and hunger, represented by desire, aggression and stupidity.